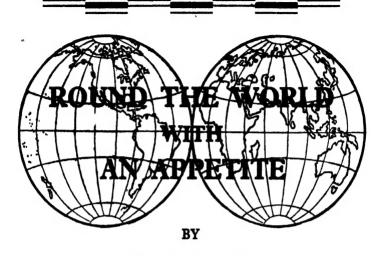
ROUND THE WORLD WITH AN APPETITE



MOLLY CASTLE



1936

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PROLOGUE

Down the Kitchen Cynic

LIKE to eat. As a matter of fact I like to cook, too, especially if I can make something very delicious without taking too long about it. I am not an expert cook. There are all sorts of important gaps in my knowledge of cooking. Half the time I do not know why you do this or that; I have never clearly known the meaning of broil,

marinade, or béchamel sauce.

I am lucky rather than skilful that the things I make almost always turn out well. Often I do not make them again, in case next time they might not; also there is always something else I am wanting to try. Even my own special "pot-au-feu de la maison" very rarely tastes the same two days running owing to an incurable tendency to experiment with strange spices and herbs, to add to it something new and startling.

So that this book is not really a cookery book (there are plenty of these, all neatly indexed and expert and difficult to follow), but a series of suggestions for the amateur cook of adventurous disposition. It is a record of dishes from my travels – not always exactly as I had them, but as I afterwards made them in my own home – and also of the circumstances which led up to eating them.

CHAPTER I

Paris-in-the-Spring

Paris-in-the-spring, like the pyramids-by-moonlight, the romance-of-the-Rhine, the mystery-of-the-East, exists mainly in the minds of movie-fed, tradition-starved American

girls.

Not that Paris in the spring is not very fine if you can care for spring in cities at all. There are the chestnut-trees in bloom, and the flower-sellers, and a quality of electric freshness in the air . . . but everywhere spring has something of that quality, and it is certainly more noticeable in the country. There are some Kentish woods that I love in which primroses and wood anemones grow in moss, and, later, bluebells. There's a view over the chalk hills, and an arrowhead of trees, new-green larch among dark pines; and, further on, along the Pilgrim's Way, edging a rolling meadow, a beech copse with polished new leaves. There is no spring anywhere which to me is so young and new and sweetsmelling as in those woods. . . . Still, no doubt spring in Paris is all right if you like that sort of thing.

The two little American girls were bored with London. They didn't want to see Buckingham Palace, nor even the Changing of the Guard. They were annoyed with their father, whose business, the business which had brought them to Europe, delayed them. They wanted to get to Paris.

He asked me to take them around, and I offered the Tower of London, which I had never seen, Westminster Abbey, which I had not seen since I was ten, the National Gallery, where I once went on a school expedition, and the British Museum, where I had never expected to go.

But they turned them all down flat, and we spent the mornings shopping and the afternoons at the movies, most of which they had already seen in New

York.

Some weeks later I had to go to Paris on business. The American father, well trained as a father as he was as a husband and had no doubt been as a suitor, sent them on ahead of him. He asked me, as a favour, to show them around Paris in my spare time, in the same way as I had shown them around London. (He'd never found out about the movies. I think even he would have rebelled at bringing two girls several thousand miles to see movies they'd already seen three months before in the United States. The girls had read up their guide-books and knew enough to talk up their sight-seeing pretty big.)

They were very sweet girls. Caroline had reddish hair, brown eyes, and dark freckles, and a lot of vivacity. Marie (pronounced M'ree) had dark hair and quite pale blue eyes. She had less gaiety than Caroline, but was considered more profound. They both had an assurance and a friendliness and a lack of inhibitions, common among American girls of

all ages, but which English girls don't acquire until

a much more advanced age, if at all.

They spent a lot of time writing letters to their beaux, telling them how much they missed them; telling them all how, if only they were in Paris, they would be having so much more fun. They had three or four beaux each; one special favourite, and others which they were just stringing along. They were named Bump and Dodge and Hank and Spike and Dummy and Toots. And there was one named Malcolm. I always felt that there must have been something very wrong with him.

They wrote long letters to their girl friends, too, describing the wonderful places they were seeing (these descriptions came mostly out of the guidebook too). The girls were going to be wild with envy, they told me; they were all crazy to see

Europe.

When they were not writing letters they were round at the American Express bullying the young

clerks for their mail.

They were writing up their London visit in their diaries, and they began to feel sorry for all the things they'd missed. "When we go back to London we must surely see Hampton Court Palace," said M'ree. "Listen what the guide-book says about it." "And the Trooping of the Colour certainly sounds like something," replied Caroline.

Still, London wasn't so very important; they were in Paris now. Paris in the springtime . . . it was too bad that it happened to be August, but

you could get the idea.

The thing to do, they decided, was to go dine

in the Bois. They would dine under the very trees where Louis XIV, or one of those kings, had dined with Madame Dubarry. Or was it Madame de Pompadour? Both, very probably. The Pavillon d'Armenonville . . . what a history there was to

that place!

So one evening we took a taxi and drove out there. It would have been romantic, the girls thought, if we could have hired an open carriage; though maybe it had been a coach in which Louis whichever-it-was used to drive there. Still, a carriage would have been more in keeping than these taxis which pushed along at such a dangerous speed that you could hardly see anything.

We were swept along the Champs Elysées, past the Arc de Triomphe, and into the Avenue du Bois

de Boulogne.

"This," I said presently, "is the Bois de Boulogne."

They looked out of the window at the dusty

trees.

"Maybe it gets better later on," said M'ree.

"It's pretty enough now," said Caroline. "But there are rather a lot of people about. It looks kind

of like a park."

The taxi curved into the drive of the Pavillon d'Armenonville. I paid the taxi double fare, aller et retour, and we watched it drive away. Then we turned to look at the Pavillon.

"Nice place," said Caroline. "It looks kind of

like a country club."

"Only I guess it's all made of marble," M'ree decided.

A waiter came forward. "Dîner, madame? A table for three?" And he led us right around the outdoor dining-room to a table against the hedge on the far side, from where a tired, bored orchestra

were wailing on balalaikas.

There was a dance-floor in the middle, but nobody looked as if they were going to dance. There were only a few other parties, and they were spread out in as many directions as possible, presumably to make it look as if there were more people than there actually were.

"Of course it's a little out of season now," I

apologised.

"Yes, I imagine in the spring . . . "

"Or even in June . . . '

"The fashionable Parisians will all be at Deauville or Biarritz by now . . . "

"And there aren't so many Americans as there

used to be in Paris."

"I certainly wish that Bump or Dodge were

here. . . . '

"Or even Malcolm," said Caroline. "That band certainly makes me feel like dancing. What kind of music do you think it is? Hungarian? Or Russian?"

"I wouldn't know," I said. "If you care at all,

I think you'll get a good dinner."

They ordered melon and I had a lobster cocktail. If there had been a hamburger they would probably have had that next. They were no gourmets. Only that day they had drunk hot chocolate with their Wiener schnitzel for lunch.

The waiter recommended "canard sauvage."

"Savage duck," said M'ree. "That sounds most

exciting."

The duck was very good indeed, and so was the winy orange and vegetable sauce. We had wild strawberries afterwards, and, though they were of a fine quality, and soaked in sugar and kirsch, they didn't make up to the two little Américaines for whatever it was – romance, excitement – that they had come so far to find. And to me they didn't compare with the wild strawberries I've picked myself on a little hillside below a wood.

We called for the bill. It was 295 francs, and after we had made that work out to somewhere around £455., or 21 dollars, we laughed a good deal and agreed that spring in Paris came pretty expensive for anyone who couldn't take their romance out in

savage duck.

The next time I met Caroline was at a party in New York. She didn't see me when I first came in, and I heard her voice before I saw her. She was saying: "But you've never lived until you've known spring in Paris! Not only seen it, but felt it. There's something about the electricity in the air which goes straight to your head. There's nothing in the world so romantic as seeing the chestnut-trees blooming in the Bois de Boulogne, the same chestnut-trees under which Louis XIV walked with Madame Dubarry. There's nothing quite like the quality of high romance, the fragrance, the sweetness of it all. . . ."

"Especially of the wild strawberries in kirsch,"

I said. "Hullo, Caroline."

She held out her hand. "I was just saying,"

she said, and she had the grace to smile, "that there is nothing in the United States to compare with Paris in the springtime."

"Well, that's true enough," I said.

RECIPES

LOBSTER COCKTAIL

This was made by the waiter on the side table, and you yourself can conjure it up in no time at all and get a great reputation for preparedness if you find the people you'd asked in for cocktails evidently intend staying for dinner.

Our waiter used | mayonnaise, | Heinz tomato sauce, salt, a sprinkle of red pepper, a squeeze of lemon. He mixed them together, added broken-up pieces of fresh lobster, served them in small glasses.

Of course you are hardly likely to have a fresh lobster handy, but you can use *bottled prawns* or *shrimps* with almost equally good effect. Some people serve *oysters* in this sauce too, but not to me.

WILD DUCK (Canard Sauvage) in Casserole with Vegetable and Orange Sauce

Lard the wild duck (they're not savage once they're dead) thoroughly and put it in a large fireproof dish. Cook in a slow oven, basting until it is a nice, golden colour.

Meanwhile chop up into cubes 2 turnips, 2 carrots, 2 swede and 2 shallots.

Take the duck out of the casserole, stir into the fat 3 dessertspoonfuls of flour (myself I prefer wholemeal Bw flour, but don't let that stop you), and when that, too, is golden, pour in a pint of bot stock. Skim off the surface fat. Put back the duck and add the vegetables, which you have previously fried for a short time in butter, having at the same time sprinkled them with sugar, salt and pepper. Add a bunch of mixed herbs and cook for twenty minutes in a slow oven.

Then add \(\frac{1}{4} \) a pint of new peas, 2 oranges cut in thin rounds, a little finely grated orange peel, 2 tablespoonfuls of white wine (Marsala is a useful wine for this purpose, though it is not a French wine) and put back in your slow oven for another half hour.

The duck will be easier to carve if it is served on a flat dish with the vegetable sauce heaped all around it. Otherwise you'll have it skipping all about the place, and, as likely as not, landing on the floor, where the cat will make away with it.

CHAPTER II

Paris: Left Bank

It is fin de saison.

It is n't until the taxicab drivers bow to the ground for a fifty-centime tip - no hissing, not a single muttered threat - that you realise that there must be something very wrong with Paris. It is fin de saison.

Paris, the chic, fantastic Paris of the Ritz bar and the Rue de la Paix, has removed to the casino and

the plage.

But there is still the Left Bank which is gay and vulgar and brightly lit. It is at its best when the rest of Paris seems dead, and not entirely by contrast either.

Night is the time for the Left Bank. But you must go over first in the daytime. Walk through the Luxembourg Gardens. It has been raining, and the stiff rows of flowers look newly varnished. The long avenue of chestnuts is already turning yellow. See the statues? The Queens of France. The pretty ones are not even Queens. . . .

At the other end of the gardens there is an artist encamped under each tree, holding a one-man show. Most of the paintings look like coloured photographs; but there is one exhibition that I like: orange, blue and vermilion trees under a purple sky. The artist's flowing beard and smock, his drooping beret, are so fancy dress that they can

only be for the benefit of the American tourists.

They say that one of the artists has sold a picture to a baker's wife and the price he got for it was a

to a baker's wife, and the price he got for it was a loaf of bread every day for a year. A business man,

that one.

Two out of every three shops on the Boul' Mich' and the Boulevard Montparnasse are cafés. In between, there are hat shops where you can buy the very same beret that you could get for twice the price and with half the enthusiasm in the Rue Royale. The men's shops are nice, too. Plus fours to the ankles of an excellent emerald green check. Shoulders set square, like a box. And the ties! Wide white foulard, decorated with red and yellow hearts.

But it is at night that the Left Bank is at its best. Across the street from the Dôme there is a funny little Russian café where the bortsch is excellent. Then, afterwards, when you have fought for your table, sit on the pavement outside the Dôme and drink a café crème. Sip your crème de menthe frappé through a straw – it lasts longer – and watch the people go by.

All the nations of the world are streaming past; but few English and not even very many Ameri-

cans.

There are two beaming Japanese in bowler hats. There is a French girl with a clipped-eared, spotted Great Dane. When she bought it it was meant to be a Dalmatian, but it grew. . . .

There is an Arab carpet-seller with goat-skin rugs and real Persian carpets. That's what be says. "Arucelis, arucelis, machichi, machichi, bon affaire,

bon affaire, cinq cent francs." One of them has a large Mickey Mouse woven into the design. It is the carpet-seller's favourite. "Meekey, Meekey." He points lovingly. If you encourage him, cinq cent francs will eventually come down to five.

There is a coloured man with a ring through his nose. He lifts the ring with a straw while he

drinks.

There is a boxer as big as Carnera and a man with blond curls right down to his waist. Two students are playing with a pair of white rats which are running about on their shoulders and heads; and there is a Chinese eating a pistachio ice-cream. "The green ice of the little yellow god," I murmur, and there are groans from the party.

There are a great number of negroes, fantastically dressed, and a man selling etchings who proclaims over and over again that he writes, paints, sketches and etches. We remark that, from the etchings, he

should stick to the first three.

There is an ice-cream man doing a roaring trade and a sheik in black glasses advertising a local night-club. Over everything there is the monotonous, repetitive song of the newsvendor: "Paris Soir, Paris Soir." Qui mal y pense.

After a while we are restless and want to walk

too. The other cafés are just as crowded.

Outside one of them there are all sorts of silly games. You put in fifty centimes and play with great skill, but however good you are you get nothing back.

RECIPES

BORTSCH

There are probably more ways of cooking bortsch than any other dish. It is the Russian pot-au-feu, but it always has beetroot and it always has sour cream. Here are two ways of making it, one much more elaborate than the other. The first is the recipe of Natale Zombardo, famous soup-maker, given in his own words.

"A piece of beef, a duck, and quantities of the finest stock. The beef is slowly boiled in the stock, and then there are added fresh tomatoes, onions, celery, parsley, herbs (a dozen different kinds), and the whole is gently boiled

again for two hours.

"Then, after the soup has been skimmed, the beef is taken out and minced, and onions fried in butter, with freshly cut cabbage, beetroot and celery and the juice of the beetroots, are put into the pan, and the whole is allowed to simmer for a further three hours, during which time the soup must be constantly stirred.

"It is allowed to cool and the top is skimmed off.

"Then a further period of simmering and the soup is ready to serve, after sour cream has been introduced and more beetroot juice to give the soup a rich red colour. It is served with small squares of beef, beetroot, and sour cream."

That way is very elaborate. Here is a much more simple way, more suited to the tempo of the average housewife.

Skin 4 raw beetroots and cut finely, cook them in butter for ten to fifteen minutes, strain over them $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of vegetable and meat stock. As this becomes absorbed, add

more stock until the beetroot is tender. Then add the rest of the stock (2 to 2½ pints altogether). Simmer gently for three-quarters of an hour. Add 4 table-spoonfuls of sour beetroot juice, and, just before serving, 4 tablespoonfuls of sour cream, which will float on the top.

Although bortsch is the accepted English spelling, it should be spelled borshch if it were to be pronounced in the Russian manner.

CUTLET POJARSKY

Chop up the remains of a cold chicken finely to the weight of about ½ pound. Mash up 1½ ounces of stale breadcrumb in milk and mix well with the chicken. So far this sounds like a nice cheap dish, but here we pause for a moment's extravagance while we pop in 2 table-spoonfuls of cream, the yolk of an egg. You can season it too, which won't be expensive.

Shape this nice gooey mass into cutlets, egg and breadcrumb them, and fry slowly in butter. A fine rendering of cutlet bones should now be given by small pieces of uncooked macaroni stuck into the thin end of the cutlet. If you want to carry the impersonation to an extreme, you can dress these up in little paper frills.

Put some chicken stock into the butter in which the cutlets were fried; mix well together. Add a table-spoonful tomato sauce and some sour cream thickened with flour to the stock, and bring once to the boil; strain over the cutlets.

CHAPTER III

Walk in Paris

THERE was a man shouting outside my window when I woke up in the morning. I looked out and he smiled up at me. He looked the greatest ruffian unhanged, so I smiled back.

He pointed to his travelling shop and asked if I wanted to buy. There was an oil-stove and a baby-chair, some rabbit-skins and a lot of old sacks.

Well, no, there was nothing I really needed.

I went into the sitting-room. There was a balcony to the sitting-room, or perhaps it was only a window-ledge. But I could just manage to perch myself on it with a typewriter so that I could get some sun and work at the same time – when I was not wasting time staring down into the street.

The street below was narrow and crowded with shops. Opposite, and just below, was a sweetand-wine shop. The sweets were in glass bottles all along the front; the wine was in glass bottles

in the window immediately behind.

In a tray by the door there were packets of raisins,

triangle shaped, wrapped in cellophane.

The sweets looked very gay; they were very bright colours. There is not a more violent shade of orange, a richer purple, such spring-like greens.

I planned to buy some and then put my tongue

out at myself in the glass. It would look like a harlequin. Another thing I ought to get would be a yard of bread. It would be useful for the riots which I had read about in the English Press but had never seen. I would like to crack an agent on the head with a yard of bread.

Next to the sweet shop there was a fruit shop. I decided not to bother about work, but instead to go down and buy a basket full of peaches. Most of the time I would rather eat peaches than work.

I walked down the street eating the peaches. It was sunny and hot. I walked twice round the outside edge of the Place Vendôme before the peaches were finished, then along the Rue de la Paix.

The Rue de la Paix, I thought, is bankrupt. Half of the shops are empty. There are notices growing thickly all along the street: A louer. It seems that

the whole place is to let.

The shops that are left – and they are mostly jewellers' – have thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery in the windows. A lot of it is owned by the bankers. But the Rue de la Paix still has an air, the assured air of a beautiful woman even after her beauty has begun to fade.

At the end I doubled right and went all the way up the Avenue de l'Opéra to the Louvre; and from the Louvre through the Tuileries Gardens to the

river.

The stiff, neat gardens with their primly patterned flower-beds are not so gallant as the parks in London. The river, on the other hand, is much more exciting in Paris. The Thames can look beautiful in spite of what they have done to it, but the Seine is beautiful because of it. It is intended to look beautiful, and it does.

There are trees all along the water's edge here, below the embankment. In the winter they stand in water.

Tugs push along upstream, held back by the weight of barges. Sometimes a boat – a small flat boat like a punt – rushes downstream, steered by an oar in the stern. Along the edge men are fishing. I have never seen a fish caught.

There is a foot-bridge across the river, and beyond that the Pont Neuf, which leads on to the Ile de la Cité. The silhouette of the island stands

out grimly against the sky.

Over on the island there are cobbled streets and little old houses and a lot of impressive buildings. There is the préfecture of police and the Hôtel des Invalides and Notre Dame. Also there is a market. On Sundays it is a bird market, and on Wednesdays – this was a Wednesday – there are flowers. The market is held under long, glass-roofed, sideless sheds, but it overflows all along the quai. The best of the flowers are under the roofs, though. On the quai there are boxes of garden plants, and young trees and shrubs for transplantation, and ferns; no flowers.

The flowers don't seem to be any cheaper than they are in shops, but maybe they would be if you knew how to buy. They look nicer, though; such thick banks of them, so near the river.

There is, on the island, a small, triangularshaped place. In the middle there is a triangleshaped plot of earth, with trees growing on it. They are cut back so that in summer they give a

very heavy shade.

On one side of the triangle is a restaurant-bar, very little more than a bistro. It belongs to a Monsieur Paul – or at least it bears his name – and it is not yet in the guide-books.

It is double-sided. In summer you can sit on the shady side facing the square, or on the sunny side

overlooking the river.

On the sunny side tame sparrows gather on the road to wait for scraps, narrowly missing being run over by the motor-cars, which flatten their scraps of bread into the soft tarmac. An old chair-mender drives a little cart up and down, blowing an old brass trumpet to announce himself to the house-wives of the neighbourhood.

A smell of cooking comes from the window on this side, which is the kitchen side. The smell is herbaceous, and very pleasant before you have

lunched. Afterwards, a little nauseating.

On the other side, the shady side, there is no smell of cooking and also less dust. You can still smell the herbaceous smell, but faintly. It comes from the speciality of the day: the veal cutlets in paper bags.

The speciality of the day is also the speciality of the week, and indeed of the year. Chez Monsieur Paul there are always two things to eat: the veau en papiottes, the baba au rhum flambé. They are very good, and, although you might not like to eat them every day for a year, you will certainly come back to eat them every time you are in Paris. Also, though it does not seem important, they are very, very cheap.

RECIPES

COTELETTES DE VEAU EN PAPIOTTES

Take 4 cutlets of veal (for four people), brown them well in butter so that they are cooked on both sides. Set them aside to drain.

Fry 3 finely chopped shallots in butter, cooking at the same time a bunch of fresh herbs. The successful flavour of this dish depends largely on the herbs used. You will never get it quite right; there is something a little magic about M. Paul's herbs that makes you go back and back to find out what they could have been. But sweet basil or rosemary are good herbs if they can be obtained. When the onions are soft (they must not be allowed to get hard and black), add ½ pound mushrooms finely chopped, and fry gently till tender. Remove the herbs, drain the mixture, and spread some over each of the veal cutlets.

Take 4 sheets of foolscap paper; paint them all over on one side with oiled butter. Lay a cutlet on each, fold over. Starting where the paper bends over at the back. make small double folds all along the edge until the cutlet is entirely contained in a shell-shaped container which will not come undone. Put the bags in a moderate oven for not more than 10 minutes, until the paper begins to brown. Serve in the cases, especially if it is someone's birthday.

BABA AU RHUM FLAMBE

Take an ordinary sponge baba - the sort that has a hole in the middle (or, if you prefer it, make them yourself; I will tell you about that presently). Fill the hole with stiffly whipped and sweetened cream. In a small pan warm some rum until it is at a temperature at which it will ignite. Pour it all over the baba, taking care not to let the flame go out. To make the baba:

½ pound flour
% ounce yeast
½ pint of milk
3 ounces butter
3 eggs
1½ ounces suger
A pinch of salt

Sift part of the flour into a large basin; make a hole in the centre. Mix yeast to a smooth paste with a little warm (not boiled) milk. Add it to the flour. Mix the preparation to a smooth dough with the hands. Cover with a cloth and leave it in a warm place till it is twice the dough it was. Meanwhile, making a well in the rest of the flour, add mixed-up eggs, melted butter, sugar, and the rest of the milk. Mix with the hands very thoroughly. When the dough is risen, add the two basinfuls together. Knead for at least ten minutes. Put the mixture into well-buttered tins shaped so that the finished baba will have a hole in the centre.

CHAPTER IV

Foreign Correspondent

The Foreign Correspondent's office was one of the smaller rooms of his flat. In some ways this was a convenient arrangement, because officially he was on duty until 4 a.m. By having his office within calling distance of his dining-room he was able to entertain his friends to dinner while one of his assistants guarded the office telephone.

By having an extension from one of his office telephones into his bedroom he could even go to bed sometimes at a reasonable hour. Not that he cared about early hours, but some of his assistants

did.

The arrangement had its disadvantages, though. Although he could get a little home life thrown in with his office hours, he could practically never get any that wasn't. Until he married, the entire staff, consisting of one official and one not quite so official assistant, a Russian girl-secretary who knew languages, and a Swiss boy whose position was undefined but who was said to have contacts, dined with him every night.

The Foreign Correspondent was a connoisseur of food, and his dinners were very good. He liked to have people to appreciate his catering, and the

assistants liked dining with him very well. It saved them from buying their own dinners, for one

thing.

It was when his wife first saw the housekeeping bills that she objected. She was not a particularly domesticated girl, but she disliked living all the time in a crowd. The housekeeping bills made as good an excuse as any for getting a little time to herself.

There were still dinner-parties three or four times a week. There was still a stream of other correspondents from the central office in London; there was still a crowd of contact men, assistants, and hangers-on around the house, an overflow from the office – which was too small to take more than three people at a time – from 3 p.m. to 3 a.m. each day.

The hospitable Foreign Correspondent liked it until he saw his drink bill at the beginning of every month. His wife never cared for it at all. Even her bedroom was just a passage on the way to the cocktail bar. And the cocktail bar, a small room with a lot of big bottles and a few chromium benches, was

used a good deal.

One week I was sent over for some special women's angle stories, and an artist was sent with me. The Foreign Correspondent asked us to dinner.

As we passed through the living-room we saw a spit slowly turning in front of the open fire: shashelik, one of the specialities of the house. It sputtered faintly as it turned, and it smelled very good. We went on through to the cocktail bar.

The other three guests were German. There was a prince who spoke good English with an American accent, and a baron who spoke without any accent at all, not even an English one. His wife understood English, but spoke in German. He threatened to mix a cocktail one-third gin, one-third whisky, one-third Calvados, which, he claimed, would lay you out on the ground, cold. We compromised with White Ladies.

The Foreign Correspondent spoke excellent German himself, but the conversation was in English. It always is in any country where even one Englishman is among a gathering of foreigners. The English are a lazy and arrogant race where

languages are concerned.

Through the moules marinières the conversation was controversial, though in a friendly manner. The German prince, who was far too young to remember the last war, still showed the aggressiveness of inferiority complex. He spoke of a plaque in a French wood which had been put there by the French and referred to the Germans in insulting terms. He said he would never be happy until he could tear that plaque up with his own hands and brain a Frenchman with it.

The Foreign Correspondent said that showed a typically German spirit, and that the English would laugh at such a plaque. Your German, he said, would want to prove that it was not true, believing that until it was proved it would be considered a fact. Your Englishman would think it so ridiculous as to be ignored as a joke. It would reflect, he would think, not against the nation it slandered, but

against the nation who did the slandering. It would show that they still had something to fear, he said.

So then we ate the shashelik. The expression "done to a turn" must have been originated for just such a dish. The wine was good. So, in its way, was the conversation.

It wasn't until some time after dinner that the

Scotland Yard detectives arrived.

We named them Mutt and Jeff, and they had come over on a murder case. There was some question of extradition.

The not-quite-so-official assistant of the Foreign Correspondent had been with them all day while they questioned the prisoners. He had taken them out to dinner. Finally he had served them up all hot at the Foreign Correspondent's dinner-party.

Detective-Inspector Mutt was a short fat man, shrewd, north country: within a few months of his twenty-five years' limit of police service. He knew a great deal of very bad idiomatic French. He spoke it all the time ("quell bell longue"), particularly to the young German prince, who protested that he didn't understand French and would he please mind talking English. But Mutt was very proud of his French. It was his foreign language, and he would have spoken it in Turkey, Russia, or to Central African negroes. He was nice, but a bit show-off; the ideal type for a newspaper correspondent.

Detective Jeff was quite different from his superior: much younger, thinner, keener. He actually did speak perfect French; and German too. But he didn't use them more than once: his French when he first came into the room, thinking that he was among French people; his German when Mutt asked him to test the nationality of the German

prince.

Mutt told us a lot about the murder case. He gave a lot away, but he was in pretty safe company. "You can't use that," he would say; and he was right. A newspaper never does double-cross the police; it wouldn't be worth its while. The Foreign Correspondent led him on, flattered him. The German prince, too, was a clever young man. He started all his remarks to Mutt with the remark: "Perhaps I shouldn't be asking this, but I am so interested. . . ."

We learned much about the case, its intricacies, its connection with international law; of how Mutt had questioned one of the prisoners for three hours until at last he had told all. I began to think that it must surely be the story of the year, that it would fill the whole of the front page of all the national dailies. Unless, of course, my own paper had a scoop. (But next day I found, with that extraordinary get-togetherness of newspapers, they had all given it exactly half a column on page three. And they were right; it didn't sound so very interesting, shorn of its dope, its white-slave trafficking, its intimate hint of third degree.)

Mutt was very certain that the murderer would be extradited in two or three days, treaty or no treaty. It turned out later that the murderer was a French

subject, and I never heard that he ever was extradited. But to me the law spoke with such authority that I wondered the prisoner was even to

be given two or three days' grace.

Later the detectives hinted that they would like to see some of Paris night life. It was not, they took care to point out, that they wanted to see these things for their own sake: it was all in the course of their duties. It was essential to them, when Paris night life came up in cases, that they should be able to talk with authority about this place and that,

know just what was going on.

The Foreign Correspondent and his satellites went off in two carloads, a detective apiece. The Foreign Correspondent quarrelled with his wife, who considered there was likely to be more pleasure than business about such an expedition and wanted to go along. Knowing when I'm not wanted, I went back to my hotel – down in the lift, across the cobbled courtyard, watched by the concierge's unseen eyes, through the big door which mysteriously swung back to let me pass, frightening me, as it always did late at night, by apparently opening quite without human aid just one second before I reached it.

I heard the rest the next day. They went the round of the night-clubs, they danced with the girls in their little aprons at The Sphinx, they danced with the negresses at The Boule Blanche. Finally the young detective decided his investigations were not quite complete, persuaded the others to lose his superior. So Mutt was taken back to his hotel, deposited on the pavement outside. However, you

can take a detective to his hotel, but it's harder to get him inside. "There's your hotel," said the Foreign Correspondent. "Oui, le voici, le voici," said Mutt, pacing up and down, "mais où est Jeff?" And the last that was seen of him he was still walking the pavement outside the hotel. And that was five o'clock in the morning.

The next day the Foreign Correspondent had a communication from the head office. "We are sending over Browning by the mid-day plane," said the communication. "We believe he may be able to contact 'Mutt' and 'Jeff,' the Scotland Yard

detectives who are in Paris just now. . . ."

RECIPES

MOULES MARINIERES

You have to shave mussels; they grow beards. Then you have to wash them well. It's all very intimate. After that you put them in a pan and cook them for a few minutes over a brisk fire. Throw away any that have not opened up. Secretive mussels are no good.

Save the water that comes out of them and boil it down a bit. Melt some butter and brown a little flour in it. Add cream and pepper, but watch out for the salt. Add the mussel-water and 1 drop of tincture of iodine (so far you'd never know if this was a hospital, a kitchen, or an American police station). Put in some finely chopped tarragon, onion, chervil, parsley and shallot. Cook gently; the sauce should thicken.

Take off the smaller of the shells from each mussel

and lay the rest out on a big dish. Cover them with the sauce, and, if you like that sort of nonsense, finely chopped parsley.

SHASHELIK

If you have an old-fashioned spit which goes in front of an open fireplace and mechanically turns the meat slowly, this is the best weapon for making shashelik. If you have no spit you can use a skewer and turn by hand. In either case an open fire, either of glowing embers or of glowing wood, is essential.

You will need rounds of saddle or breast of lamb or mutton cut about 3 inches in diameter, about ½ inch thick, and with all the fat left on. Rub these with garlic and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Arrange on the spit with alternate rounds of onion cut thick and seasoned. The spit should turn slowly until the meat is properly cooked on all sides, or, if a skewer is used, it should be turned every few minutes. Ten to fifteen minutes should be enough, as the meat need not be cooked right through.

CHAPTER V

The Love 'em and Leave 'ems

NCE upon a time way back in B.A. (before Abyssinians) there was a crazy little island in the Adriatic where the English and the Italians used to get together in the most friendly

manner every summer.

Maybe the island is still there, but it wouldn't be the same any more. Maybe prim English matrons are still affected by something in the wind – it's a wind they call scirocco and it's said to be pretty deadly; maybe they still shed their woollen vests and their inhibitions and disappear, around six o'clock, into the hinterland of the island perched on the luggage-grid of a handsome Italian's bicycle. But I don't think so. The English matrons may

But I don't think so. The English matrons may still be there, the *scirocco* may still blow away their inhibitions, the bicycles may be rusting in their sheds, but the Italians are shooting at other targets

- targets that are certainly no harder to hit.

In those days there were plenty of handsome young Italians on the island, capable of steering, and in fact willing to steer, a bicycle or a lady into the undergrowth. Some of them arrived in airplanes and some of them arrived in yachts, and some of them seemed just naturally to grow there. But, of all the Italians who ever sailed to the island before a

favourable wind, the Love 'em and Leave 'ems were the best pirates of the lot.

A sail used to be sighted out at sea, and, if it had a kind of waggish, raffish look to it, the more unattached among the island's womenfolk would gather together on the quay, hearts and handkerchiefs fluttering. As soon as the yacht came nearer, the Love 'em and Leave 'ems' war-song would come faintly across the water, stronger and louder as the boat came nearer shore. "Around the Corner and Under a Tree" was the song, and they knew all the

words. They never sang an Italian song.

Usually there were four of them on the yacht. Somebody started the rumour that they were all princes or kings or something, but nobody believed it. Even though they came from a country where most people have titles, nobody ever imagined they were even counts, because they wore white cotton trousers, very dirty and crumpled, with blue and white striped pullovers they had bought in Ragusa for two lire. They seemed to have no money and very little food. They were tall and dark and handsome all right, though, and there were plenty of people ready to pay for more than their meals.

They would stay two or three days, and when they left they would raid the hotel dining-room and take lobsters, and boxes of peaches, and whole legs of cold lamb. Nobody seemed to mind about this, not even the people to whose bills the legs of lamb were finally charged.

After that they went back to Ragusa. There were

good pickings there, too, we heard.

Everything on the island was explained by the scirocco, the wind that blew from the south. Everything, that is, except the Neapolitan musicians. However, they didn't count. If they had they might have kept better time.

The Neapolitans played every night at an outdoor dance place known as the Bull-ring. It looked like a circular swimming-pool without any water. It was usually rather chilly dancing out there, and it

was surrounded by powerful arc lights.

The Love 'em and Leave 'ems never really cared for the Bull-ring. It may have been the fact that men wore dinner-jackets to dance in the Bull-ring; it was that sort of a place. It may have been the powerful lights. It may even have been the Neapolitans.

Anyway, the very next time they came sailing in from Ragusa they brought their own band with them. They had press-ganged the band: there were two men and a boy, and they played various instruments, including a concertina. They played them very well.

The boy was delighted at being kidnapped. He had always wanted to go to sea. The two men hadn't been very pleased, especially as they were not good sailors. They claimed, too, that they were under contract to fulfil engagements in Ragusa.

They were happier, though, as soon as they got to the island. There were more lire on the island than ever there had been at Ragusa. Besides, they had never cared for Neapolitans.

The Love 'em and Leave 'ems started up their band every time the Neapolitans got going. For a

few evenings the Bull-ring was deserted by all but the most stiffly starched white shirts. Everyone else gathered in the bar, where there was room to dance and where everyone joined up into one big party instead of sitting in stiff little groups as they did at the Bull-ring, and where anyone paid for drinks who had the money. (The Love 'em and Leave 'ems never had money, but had they not, after all, though at no cost to themselves, provided the band which was the centre of all the evening's entertainment'?)

All around the hotel there was a thick wood. This was known as the Bosco, which was almost the only other Italian word used on the island

besides lira.

People used to take walks in the Bosco to cool off from the dancing. They stayed out long enough to catch an important cold, but they never seemed to worry. The Love 'em and Leave 'ems considered themselves pretty expert at knowing their way around the Bosco, and would always offer to share their knowledge.

A couple would start off very quickly at first into the Bosco, and then more and more slowly up, or down, the path. The darker the path the better. The paths were always surrounded by bushes. At least, so I was told by reliable sources. I didn't

have a flashlight with me that night.

The longer people were on the island the simpler their life became. They would start by bathing from the specially constructed Saluga with its locked huts, its tidy separated sunbathing sections (men on one side, women on the other); by drinking cocktails afterwards on the loggia dressed in elaborate pyjama suits; by eating a four-course luncheon in the hotel dining-room.

After a while they never went to the Saluga any more, but bathed from the rocks on the other side of the island, dived from natural promontories, lay in the sun, wore few clothes or none at all, and ate a lunch of fruit and eggs under a shady tree.

This process was known as "going native," and was disapproved of pretty strongly by newcomers or people who couldn't ride bicycles. Bicycles were the only means of transport on the island. After a while the newcomers stopped disapproving and became old inhabitants, and the people who couldn't ride bicycles got someone to take them on their carriers.

One American girl with her mother never joined in any fun. She never learned to ride a bicycle or a carrier; she never stopped changing three times daily into newer and more elaborate pyjamas, never stopped disapproving of the Love 'em and Leave 'ems.

They were like pirates, she said, and, besides, they were not really gentlemen.

Foreigners very rarely were, added her mother. Unless they were dukes or princes at least. She would have liked to have a daughter who was a princess, and Louise was her only child.

The last time the Love 'em and Leave 'ems left the island (they had a baron of beef and two whole roast chickens and they were going back to Ragusa with their band) we said good-bye to them. We would be in Venice, we said, by the time they returned: we were leaving in a couple of days' time. That was swell, they said; then they would see us in Venice, sure. We laughed and said surely, and they left and we never expected to see them again.

We arrived in Venice one evening. We had been sad to put on civilised clothes again and

return to cities.

We sat on the balcony of the Grand Hotel watching the leisurely criss-cross of movement on the canal, the gondola traffic of Venice. Opposite, Santa Maria was lit by the soft, bright glow of sunshine which precedes sunset. Overhead the sky was deep blue, cloudless. Where the canal broadened, lying at anchor in front of the island of San Giorgio, lay the white ship which had brought us from the island. Someone, far over in the lagoon, was singing, and the water carried the sound. It was very peaceful.

Then suddenly the peace of the evening was shattered. Three speed-boats skimmed across the water, scattering gondolas as they came. With a spectacular swirl they turned and pulled up outside the Grand Hotel. Inside, grinning, sat the Love 'em

and Leave 'ems.

"So you see, we came," they said. They were very clean, and they had neat black ties with neat black dinner-jackets. But they were still tall and dark and handsome, and they still looked like pirates, or maybe film stars.

"We've come to show you Venice," they said.
"This is our party. You didn't think we would

let you go without returning any of your wonderful

hospitality, did you?"

We scarcely liked to say that we had expected just that, so we went in to change into the sort of clothes that went with their neat dinner-jackets, and then we climbed into the speed-boats, and whisked down canals, scattering gondolas as we went.

Louise and her mother had not come with us. In spite of the clean new appearance of the Love 'em and Leave 'ems, they could still not forget their peculiar un-English and ungentlemanly behaviour on the island. They implied that they would surely know people in Venice or at the Lido, and they didn't care to be seen about in disreputable company.

The Love 'em and Leave 'ems took us to restaurants where everyone bowed. Themselves they went behind the bar and mixed us cocktails which were mostly vodka and peach brandy. The cocktails tasted of grenadine but their effect was less like grenadine than anything I ever remember

drinking.

They took us to dine and they gave us a very fine dinner. There were scampi to eat, newly caught, and that was not all. On all sides they were greeted

with deference. That surprised us a lot.

Then they put us back into their speed-boats and whisked us to the Lido, and we scarcely had time to regret the small, dark Venetian canals, the lap of the water against the furtive gondolas. It was all so gay and noisy at the Lido, and surely a bright, blaring American band was much more fun than the soft wailing musica of the gondoliers.

It was certainly a very fine party, an excellent return for hospitality. On the way back they showed us, casually, in passing, an old Venetian palazzo dipping deep into the water. They lived there, they mentioned indifferently, when they were not in Rome. They hadn't asked us to dine with their family, though; it would have been so dull.

They dropped us at our hotel and said good night. The concierge was waiting up for us and he was very deferential. Suddenly we had become

milords, miladies.

"If milords and miladies had only told us they were expecting Their Excellencies," wailed the concierge, "we could have prepared a special dinner for you here. Something very, very special. It would have done us so much good. Unless, of course"—and his voice dropped still lower—"milords dined with Their Excellencies at the Palazzo Dolomite?"

We hadn't done that, we said, and the concierge looked regretful and said that no, it could hardly be expected that such an honour would be paid even to the English milords.

We never saw the Love 'em and Leave 'ems again. But they had been princes or kings or

something, all right.

We had a lot of fun telling Louise about it next day. Perhaps she did marry a prince in the end, too. He wasn't an Italian, though.

RECIPES

SCAMPI

Scampi are small shell-fish half way between an overgrown prawn and an undersized lobster. A similar kind of animal (but not, perhaps, quite so good) is sold very cheaply in England and named Dublin Bay prawns. They can be cooked similarly, and make an easy, unusual, and inexpensive fish course. They should be dipped in yolk of egg, seasoned flour, and then fried for a very few minutes in the best olive oil.

STUFFED PEACHES

Carefully skin and stone some large, not very ripe peaches, one per person. Fill them with 1 ounce pounded sweet almonds, a small piece of well-chopped candied lemon peel, any peach pulp that has come away with the stone, sugar, and finely broken macaroon biscuits all mussed up together. Join the peaches together again, put them on a fireproof dish, pour a little white wine over them, sprinkle well with sugar, and bake in a moderate oven. The sugar will put a crust over them, with luck and a certain amount of good management.

CHAPTER VI

Crazy Week-end

In the June of 1929 I started out, with three other people, on a week-end motor-tour which turned out to be the sort of crazy adventure that most of us have when we are young enough to know better.

June 1929 was an eventful month. People look back on it in the same way they look back to June 1914. One was before the war, the other before the depression, and things have never been quite the same since. Myself, I was too young to be affected by the war, and only since the depression have I made any money.

My friend Lois was engaged to a young man who drove at Brooklands. That was another phase that most of the girls I knew went through and came out of more or less unscathed. In those years I was in love with at least four of those oily and indifferent young men whose horizons were bounded by Bentleys in the east, the Berkeley Hotel in the west.

So when Lois wanted to drive to Le Mans to see the motor races, I was very pleased indeed to go along.

We started out early on a Friday morning in the Bentley which had recently been acquired by Bill, Lois's young man. It was the fifth car in the Bentley team of four, and was painted British green. I remember that the number 10 was still daubed in whitewash on a black disc, relic of the double-twelve, or whatever Brookland race it had last competed in unsuccessfully. It was a 4½ litre, and supercharged, and although it was considered an inferior motor-car by people in the know, it would do 110 m.p.h. on the road.

Our fourth was Bill's partner, Mac, whom I had never met before. They were partners in a motor-car business which they seemed to run less on a profit basis than as a means of buying their own cars at a discount. Also, the offices were in Sack-ville Street, which was convenient for the cocktail-

parties they held in the front room.

We drove down to Dover and crossed the Channel in a cargo-boat with the car. It was quite a new boat, and we were the only passengers. It was very comfortable. The captain had deck-chairs arranged for us, and asked us up on the bridge. It was very, very calm, and Lois wished she had not taken seasick tablets. She wished it more later; they made her ill in the night.

In those days Paris was crowded with Americans. We got two rooms with a sitting-room between, in which they put a bed for Bill, at the Hôtel Vendôme. Afterwards, when Lois and I used to go to Paris for work, we always stayed there, but it never seemed

the same.

Mac got a room in a hotel down the street.

After dinner we went to the Folies-Bergère. I have never been since and only once before. That

time was with my mother, who remarked in the middle of the most spectacular scene: "Disgusting! I do wish they'd put the lights up higher."

The Americans were there too; we had to sit on little seats they crowded into the gangway for

us.

Later we tried to dance, but in those days le dressing was obligatoire, and in the end we just went to a café and drank Raspail liqueurs, which Mac said tasted like dusty bookshops. Bill tried to sell people "feelthy pos'cards" and made noises like a Paris taxi - "parpm-parpm." By then we were

merry enough to think him very witty.

We intended to start out next morning early enough to get to Le Mans in time for the start of the race. But, on account of Lois having had seasick pains in the night, we went to the Ritz bar to drink champagne cocktails, and then Bill looked at his watch and it was four o'clock, the hour the race was scheduled to start. So we had just another one-for-the-road and left Paris quicker than it had ever been left before.

Some time in the evening we reached Le Mans. Bill always drove better when he was drunk. We were cheered as we drove through the town. The Bentley team were so far ahead with the race that people thought it quite natural that two of the Bentley boys in an auto de course should take time out to show two girls the town.

The race was being run over a road circuit which wound along roads on the outskirts of the town. After we had greeted all our friends in the Grand Stand Enclosure, we wandered up the course

looking for a bistro where we could get a drink that would mix better with champagne cocktails than Dubonnet or Pernod. Bill and Mac wanted Scotch. Lois and I would just as soon have had a

cup of tea.

The town was crowded and we had not been able to get rooms. We went to the hotel where all our friends were staying, though, and there we met Robin and Toby, race-driver friends of Bill's. They had, they told us, blown a gasket. I don't know even now just what that does, but it put them out of the race all right.

So we all sat down to supper. It was 11.30 by now. When it was ordered, Lois and I borrowed Robin's bedroom and went to wash. When some of the dust of France had been removed from our faces, and other, pinker dust had been put on, we felt better, and looked better too. Robin seemed to think so, anyway; he came and sat down next to me and talked.

I liked Robin. We got on well together. Mac was annoyed about this. During the day and a half we had spent together he had begun to think that he had taken out an option on me and resented competition. But I thought Robin was more fun, besides being more of a racing driver. It turned out, too, that he had his own airplane, and had brought it with him to Le Mans. He was the son of a millionaire peer, too, but I never gave that a second thought. I was mechanically minded in those days. The motor-racing and the airplane made him just about perfect.

After supper we all went back to the grand stand.

But nobody seemed to be happy there. Mac and Robin were rude to each other in a pointed, semihumorous way, as if it was all in fun.

So we went out into the fields. There was a corner of the course named White House Corner. I don't know who it was that started to call it White Horse Mesa (after a book he was reading), but we liked it and adopted the name. It was that sort of party.

It was very warm. The lights from the cars poured round the corner, and the cars roared in and out of earshot. Just before dawn a fine mist came up, and then, when the sun rose, it wisped away into thin spirals. Mac grumpily went away to sleep

in the car, and Toby went with him.

The four of us who were left curled up on a rug. We dozed, disturbed every few minutes by the roar and crack of the racing cars as they passed us a few yards away. As the day grew lighter the headlights which had heralded them were turned out, and then there was only the intermittent noise. After a while we stopped hailing them by name. We stopped repeating: "There goes Hugh"; "That's old Jack"; "Nuvolari's going well." After a while we scarcely noticed the noise any more. It wasn't the cars, but the heat of the sun and the need to eat, which decided our move.

Stiffly we got up and wandered back to the car. There Toby and Mac were lolling in the back seat, sleeping unattractively. They woke, bad-tempered, cramped, bearded, and hungry. We went back to the hotel and ate an English breakfast, with strong, un-English coffee.

Robin and Toby each lent Lois and me a bedroom in which to rest. I slept, so tired that I was not much disturbed by the various young men who were sharing the room with Robin, who came in at intervals to wash and shave, and seemed terribly upset to find a girl sleeping in the bed. No wonder: Robin being a most circumspect young man.

Robin woke me later in the day with a cup of tea.

That, I thought, was friendly of him.

He took me down to the flying field. Robin and Toby and two or three of their friends flew off to Paris. Robin wanted me to go along too, but I couldn't because of Lois. So I went back to the hotel in the taxi we had taken out to the air field.

Lois was just awake. The Bentley team won the race at four o'clock, and we, in our fifth car of the team of four, were cheered through the town again.

Mac and Bill weren't speaking to me. I sat in the back with Bill, and we roared along the straight roads, the poplar-trees passing in a single, unbroken

curtain of green.

We stopped at Chartres for dinner, and I ordered sea-urchins, and snails, and frogs' legs, because I thought it would annoy them into talking to me again. Bill said: "We didn't bring you to France to eat up all the reptile life, you know," and we all laughed, and went on quite happily to Dinard for the night. We had lunch at Le Touquet and arrived back in London that evening. Fifteen hundred miles we had been in the week-end, and I had enjoyed it.

Mac and I remained good friends, and I saw Robin often. He would have been a useful addition to the sort of oily young racing driver I was falling in love with that summer, only that he gave up racing and I gave up racing drivers. I had had a change of heart somewhere around August and changed over to Italians. Or maybe it was film critics. I've forgotten now; it's too long ago.

RECIPE

FROGS? LEGS

The back legs of frogs taste like the legs of day-old chickens; tender, but a little finicky to eat on account of the bones. They are not easy to obtain in England, and this recipe may be used to reheat cold chicken or game.

1 pound frogs' legs or small joints of chicken, skinned. 4 cloves of garlic, or, if preferred, ½ onion. Wholemeal flour.

Chop the garlic or onion very fine, add a tablespoonful wholemeal flour, salt, pepper. Dip the frogs' legs or the pieces of chicken in the mixture, fry in butter till a golden brown. The frogs' legs should be cooked more slowly than if the chicken, which has already been cooked, is used. The chicken should only fry quickly for a very few minutes.

CHAPTER VII

Toy Island

HHERE it stands, as you come round the corner, the crazy little island-rock of Mont St. Michel rising out of the sand. It is not even a real island except twice a month: thirty-six

hours after full or new moon.

You have been so accustomed to seeing it made out of pottery, sitting on nursery mantelpieces, that you can't believe it is quite real even when you see it. It is a giant-size toy that some Brobdingnagian has left carelessly lying on the beach. Butting into the sky-line, covered with its steep flight of houses, surmounted with its monastery and fortress, it is to France what the Great Pyramid is to Egypt: inexplicable but impressive; a mixture of the endeavour of man and of nature; a fine tourist bait.

We climbed up the steep, narrow, cobbled Grande Rue. Models of the mount in all plastic inaterials, two tone or nature-coloured, complete or in bas-relief, lay in trays outside the shops to tempt itching tourist fingers. These will be bought, we said, as countless thousands have been before, by numerous aunts. They will find their way into uncounted nurseries or schoolrooms, from which they will be brought down, as long as they are

remembered, to a more spectacular position whenever the aunt comes to tea.

We wound onward and upward to the abbey buildings. Here is the Merveille, which is built in three storeys on a granite foundation, faced with a great wall of granite surrounding the cone-like top of the mount. Right on the summit of the mount sits the church, which was rebuilt in the eleventh century.

The mount has been a centre of religion and of wars in its day. Its god now is the tourist. Once up the high steps to the Salle des Gardes and the tourist will not escape until a guide has shown him the complete works.

Only then may he descend and eat in peace, and in the restaurant, his sea-food lunch. The appetite he will have acquired will be well rewarded.

RECIPE

SEA-FOOD

There's no cooking attached to this; the fishmonger will do all that for you; but there's quite a little judicious buying to be done.

You should buy, for each person, 2 Dublin Bay prawns, $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen English prawns, 2 or 3 dozen shrimps, a small dressed crab, 2 or 3 clams, 2 or 3 small oysters, and 1 seaurchin.

These should be laid out on a bed of crushed ice and served with crisp lettuce and mayonnaise.

A small finger of toast spread with caviar sometimes accompanies it.

This makes a most decorative and unusual and very simply prepared summer luncheon dish. Some people don't like sea-urchins, but they are worth having for their amusing, bird's-nesty appearance.

CHAPTER VIII

The Day we Didn't Go to Zoute

T isn't often that I go around in crowds, but that summer, seeing a blank, hot August looming up ahead of me surrounded by an overdraft, I suddenly developed a passion for a holiday spent among all my fellow-workers. Mark saved me with his invitation to tour Belgium, Germany, France and Italy in company with several people I knew. And didn't I bless him!

Mark was middle-aged, rich and delightful. We travelled in a Rolls-Royce, with another car to take the luggage. There was a chauffeur and a valet, and a maid for us girls, and we went to all the five-star hotels. The first time you go on that kind of a holiday you get a stupendous kick out of it – I know I did.

The five companions Mark had invited were young and comparatively poor. If we had had to pay for our holidays in cash they would have been very much less ambitious. That we had to pay for them in independence didn't come out till later – and then it wasn't Mark's fault: he'd been brought up to think that everything had a cash value, and maybe he was right.

Valerie was the centre-piece of our party. Mark was in love with her, so were the other men of our party and half of the other people we knew were crazy about her as well.

You couldn't blame them: not when you knew

Valerie.

She was an attractive little creature: pretty, amusing, a tantalising mixture of aloofness and accessibility, with a mischi-vous sense of humour. She admitted that she had never read an intelligent book in home but she had plenty of sense. We nicknowed her the Princess, because she was pretty in perious about getting her way, but once she had got what she wanted she was certainly generous about sharing it round again.

Mark's parties were apt to make a slow start until someone, or all of us, took control. So we were not surprised that there was some hitch at Ostend and that we had to spend a couple of unnecessary nights there waiting for the Rolls. For myself, I think any night in Ostend would be unnecessary.

To make up, we had to make a fast trip on the third day, heading for the Ardennes mountains and cutting out Brussels, which for some reason we had all determined to see. As it turned out, we saw

it all right.

Half awake (even Ostend has a night-life), we left Ostend before eight o'clock in the morning. Mark, Nigel (who was our spare driver) and the valet went off in the luggage car, an old but roomy Delage. The rest of us-Valerie, Guy and Lois-sat in the back of the Rolls driven by English, the chauffeur. Maisie, the maid, sat up on the front next to English.

Mark's last words were, "We'll see you in Zoute." It was raining, a grey, sea-mist drizzle. We didn't watch out where we were going, but after a while it did seem strange that we were still so far inland. The road to Zoute ran along the coast as far as we knew.

Guy, who was sitting on the little seat with his back to the engine, screwed round and spoke to English about it. "We save seven miles coming this way, sir," said English, an independent man. "But we also carefully avoid meeting the others," Guy pointed out.

Valerie said: "English always thinks he knows

one better," and went to sleep again.

I said that maybe we'd see the others at Bruges, anyway, and Guy replied that he didn't see any reason why we should. The car was skidding around a good bit on the greasy roads, so Lois was

too frightened to say anything.

Valerie opened one eye and said that Belgium looked quite small on the map and that we would be sure to meet them somewhere. I thought that, even if we didn't, a Rolls-Royce would certainly fetch enough to pay our fares home... or maybe we could find a British Ambassador, suggested Valerie. Guy laughed and said that even a Consul might do. And we all went to sleep again until we reached Bruges.

English bumped over the cobblestones to the central square and pulled up. It had cleared up temporarily. Bruges is a beautiful city. It was rich four centuries ago, not only in trade, but in art. Great sculptors lived there. Beautiful buildings

were built which have improved with keeping,

thereby proving their original worth.

There is the belfry, old, mellowed. Even its bells are pleasanter in the soft tinkle of maturity than they can have been in the strident chime of their youth. There are lovely, lichen-covered arches over water, gabled buildings, old carved doorways, dark archways. It was a strange contrast to the new, war-flattened country through which we had driven. New young trees, new bright roofs. . . . "There on your left," said Lois, with the guide-book, "is the Hôtel de Ville, 1619."

"I don't think it looks much like a hotel," said

Guy.

We passed through Ghent, presumably on English's way to Brussels ("Well, we wanted to see it too," Guy reminded me, when I suggested that

we might have been consulted).

Then we had the crash. The road was covered with about half an inch of slime. Coming round a corner, we found a Ford standing on the left of the road. Leisurely, a cart was plodding through all the rest of the available space. English braked hard, skidded with locked wheels. I said "Crash" and braced my feet against the small seat opposite. Guy leant forward, protecting his head with his arms, and the two girls shut their eyes.

The Rolls hit the cart's backside with a fine, loud crash. The cart careered down the road, shedding sacks of flour, which burst whitely over the muddy roadway. The car twisted sideways, balanced edgily on two wheels, righted itself, and settled down to a standstill at right-angles to the road.

We looked at each other, laughed, and compared bruises. The maid's nose was bleeding but no one was much hurt. We climbed out and had a look round. A locked front wheel, a broken steeringtube, a wing crumpled into a tire, were enough to

make it impossible to go on.

It was raining. Miserably we got back into the car, tried to decide what to do. In this we were not helped by the inhabitants of the village, who had all turned out to see the sight. They were more interested in us than in the damaged car. They spoke in Flemish, but from their voices, their pointing fingers, their derisive laughter, we gathered that their comments were far from complimentary.

"Can it be that my nose is shiny?" asked

Valerie.

After a while Guy climbed out and stood on the running-board. "Do any of you speak English?" he asked politely. There was no reply. "Then this is the opportunity I have been waiting for all my life, you so-and-so's," he went on gently. "When I finish telling you all I think of you, and of your ancestry, immediate and distant, and your village and what you can do with it, I shall feel much, much better . . ." and he went on for a longer time than I should have thought possible without repetition. He singled out each of them in turn, pointing to them, describing the habits of their families, their mode of life.

"And as for you"—he pointed to one sharpeyed old harridan behind the others—"you old..." She laughed delightedly, and, pointing to herself, ran around saying, "Bitchattheback, bitchattheback." I liked that accident. It was fun.

After a while a traveller in a Belgian car drove up. He spoke English well, and insisted on making plans for us. He lifted us into his car, drove us to Alost, bought for us, with our remaining small change, tickets to Brussels, put us in the train. I don't know by what process of reasoning he decided that we were to abandon English, Maisie, the Rolls and our luggage.

The point is that we saw Brussels. I never remember seeing so much of one town in so short a time. Round and around we walked, inquiring for Mark at hotels, tourist agencies, appealing to them for help. They none of them gave us

any.

After a while we didn't care about seeing any more of Brussels; we wanted to sit down and eat.

Along about five o'clock in the afternoon we decided we had to go into a restaurant. "Supposing they do arrest us," said Valerie, "for eating under false pretences, at least prisons have seats."

"And Mark can bail us out," said Guy, who was the prime instigator of the eat-at-all-costs move-

ment.

"If he can find where to bail," I said gloomily. And even when we were inside the restaurant I ordered with caution one of the cheaper dishes – le hochepot – believing that my sentence might thereby be lighter than Guy's, who had chosen a most expensive chicken dish, with vegetables.

We sat in the window of the restaurant. It was a large window; you could watch the people pass-

ing along the pavement.

Among these we presently saw Mark and Nigel. They didn't pass, though. Astonishing our waiter with our glad cries, we poured out of the restaurant, captured Mark and Nigel, brought them back inside. Guy quickly ordered some wine, which some delicacy of feeling (or maybe it was gloomy forecast of Belgian gaols) had prevented him from ordering before.

It took a long time to convince Mark and Nigel that we hadn't been doing all of it on purpose; and, even when they were convinced, they still persisted that none of it would have happened if only we had gone to Zoute.

RECIPE

BRUSSELS HOCHEPOT

½ pound brisket of beef

1 pound stewing veal

½ pound stewing lamb or mutton

½ pound pig's extremities: tail, feet, ears

1 pound chipolata sausages

Assorted vegetables: celery, onions, carrots, turnips, part of a cabbage, leeks, sprouts to make up about equal weight with the meat.

Put the meat into a large stewpan or casserole, cover with water. Bring slowly to the boil. Skim, and continue skimming until no more scum rises. Add chopped vegetables, a bunch of fresh berbs (bay leaves, rosemary, thyme, mint, sorrel, etc.), salt and black pepper. A table-spoonful of tomato purée is an improvement, but not an

essential. Cook very slowly from three to four hours. Taste, and add further seasoning if necessary. Add sausages and simmer for another forty minutes. This may be served in soup-plates with the meat, or the meat and vegetables may be partially drained and the soup served separately.

CHAPTER IX

Cheval Blanc at the Château d'Ardenne

DON'T know what it was that Mark had against Brussels. He hadn't wanted to go there in the first place, and he didn't want to stay there after

we had smashed up the Rolls.

Ew

Maybe it wasn't that he had anything against Brussels. Maybe he just wanted to get to the Château d'Ardenne, which he wanted to go to because he had heard that it was a first-class hotel. Perhaps somebody he cared for once had told him it was a good place. I don't know. In any case he said: "You, I or all of us want to go to the Château d'Ardenne."

We paid for our meal in the glass-windowed café-at least, Mark paid and we paid him back afterwards - and we went.

There was a message for us at the Palace Hotel from English, and soon afterwards he and Maisie arrived with all our baggage. They had had the Rolls towed into Brussels. English was feeling a little shaky, and wasn't at all happy at being confronted with a strange make of Belgian car. Nigel, who was good at cars, showed him how the gears worked (certainly they were

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unusually complicated, with strange little knobs

and levers).

Guy and I, with Nigel driving, followed the Belgian car (an Hysteria) out of Brussels. From the first there was trouble. Every time English, with Mark at the map, missed a turning, we had to stop, so that Nigel could help him get into reverse. Still in the suburbs of Brussels, the Hysteria started to sway about the road. The rear tires had gone flat, and we signalled them to stop. Mark and English went back in the Delage to the hire shop to get new tires.

Sitting in the derelict Hysteria, Lois, who was superstitious, or at least careful, decided that all our bad luck was due to a mirror she had broken, and that the only way to break the spell was to divide it up into seven pieces and bury it.

Quite a crowd collected to watch the ceremonial burial. Nigel dug the hole in the bit of dirt that edged the roadside. He dug it with a spanner. Valerie presented a powder-box for a coffin, and Guy chanted loudly over the corpse. The crowd

edged away nervously.

The dirt was thrown over, and Guy proclaimed the obituary. "And," he finished, "if an old lady on a bicycle punctures her tire, that's her bad luck and not ours."

It was ten o'clock before we started off again. It wasn't a pleasant drive. English was practically unconscious before we reached Namur and I was very glad indeed to be in the Delage.

We stopped at Namur and went to the only hotel we could find that was open (it was called Hôtel Haarscamp). We couldn't get anything to eat there, though. They told us where to find the local all-night breakfast-wagon. Lois said that the Hysteria was well named, and that's what she'd get if she drove any longer in it. So she and Valerie went in with Nigel. Guy and I were beyond caring, even when Mark, an erratic driver himself, took over from English and let the car coast downhill. He said it was to cool the binding brakes.

So we got to Château d'Ardenne, woke the night porter, and got ourselves some rooms and went

very quickly to bed.

Mark had been a shade too optimistic about the Château d'Ardenne and we none of us found there just what we had expected. Valerie had thought there would be some good-looking young men, preferably of the Latin races; Lois had wanted tennis; Guy had planned an exotic night-life; Mark hoped for some beautiful Américaines; Nigel had thought he might get a few days' golf; and I, who in those days considered myself a short-story writer (I had published at least three), hoped for an historically interesting château with "atmosphere," and maybe dungeons, about a thousand years old.

A tablet on the wall proclaimed that the château had been "construit par Leopold II, roi des Belges, 1874-1891, pour Baroness Vaughan." A nice, human king. It was the Belgian equivalent, in architecture, of late Victorian, massive, ugly, comfortable, secure; grey stone, gold turreted. There were fine grounds, and the tennis-courts for Lois, the

golf for Nigel, were there all right, but it rained for each of the four days we were there. Maybe we would have liked the place all right if it had been fine.

Every time we went out of doors we got wet. The very first morning (we were up at about 12.30) we started to go for a walk and we were caught in a storm. Running for shelter, a dog chased us, grabbed Nigel by the leg, and tore his trousers. All of us except Nigel thought this pretty funny. It was that kind of party.

After lunch Mark telephoned to Brussels to inquire about the car. It had not been started. So he and Nigel went off with English by train to

Brussels.

That night there was a gala. The manager said it was a gala; that, and the fact that we were all requested to dress, made it one. Also, there was a very special chicken dish for dinner. (The gala, as far as we were concerned, was established more by the gin fizzes for which we'd rattled poker dice before dinner in the bar than by any carnival

atmosphere that we could notice.)

So the four of us dressed and went in to dinner. The wine waiter opened the wine book and handed it to Guy. As I was the eldest, he consulted me. Neither of us knew a thing about wines except the taste of them. We thought we had better not take the first on the list because that would be a cheap wine, nor the last because that would be too expensive. We had better take one just half way down and that would be about right. The wine we chose was named Cheval Blanc, and we liked it very well and ordered two more bottles of it later.

We took a look at the solemn Belgian burgomasters and their families prancing round the dance floor and went back into the bar. We spent the evening playing poker dice, and the hotel gigolo, who fell down on his job in order to play with us, won the number of Valerie's room.

Next morning he said some bitter words to us about the "English sporting." He would have been better off, he said, to have won another gin fizz than the number of a respectable Belgian

burgomistress.

Next day the others came back. The Rolls was taking longer than we'd thought and was being more expensive. Mark was a little touchy about the whole situation. He didn't even ask us how we'd enjoyed ourselves until two days later, when he got the bill.

"Well, I'm glad to see you ordered the girls some wine the other night," he said to Guy. "I'd no idea you were such a connoisseur. Cheval Blanc, hm? I must try some of that year some time.

Must have been pretty good?"

"Not bad," said Guy airily. "A medium good wine. Not by any means one of the best on the list."

And, as we frequently pointed out afterwards, it hadn't even been one of the most expensive, so how could we have told that the wine waiter, knowing suckers when he saw them, had only shown us the page of rare vintage wines, and that the Cheval Blanc had been two pounds a bottle?

RECIPES

CHICKEN WITH PRUNES

Have a boiling fowl cut up the day before you want to use it. Let it get drunk overnight with a ½ bottle of red wine, 3 tablespoonfuls of vinegar (tarragon) and a bunch of fresh aromatic herbs to put it to sleep. The prunes – about ½ pound of them – can soak overnight too, but only in water. Next evening dry the chicken all over, especially behind the ears, and fry it lightly in butter. Set it out in a casserole, add a tablespoonful of flour to the butter in the frying-pan, fry lightly, add to the chicken. Season with salt and pepper. Add the prunes, cover with another ½ bottle of red wine, bring to the boil, then simmer for two or three hours in a low oven until the meat and fruit are both tender.

CREAMED CARROT

Some people just won't take the trouble about vegetables. In fact, most of us English think that if we have dunked the vegetable into water, and popped it out when it was ready, leaving behind all its goodness, that is all that can be expected of us, unless, maybe, a little flour and water sauce to hide up the nakedness. If we had a regular vegetable course like the Continentals do we should be different. We might even cook carrots like this:

Fry 4 shallots, 6 sliced carrots, in 2 ounces butter for a few minutes.

Add 1 pint of stock, simmer until almost cooked, having previously added seasoning, a little grated nutmeg, and a handful of sugar.

Put 2 ounces butter in a pan, add a tablespoonful flour. Cook till brown; add stock drained off carrots, and more to make up ? pint. Bring to the boil and cook slowly until it thickens. Add further seasoning if necessary; put in the carrots and simmer for another five minutes.

CHAPTER X

Unspoilt

On travelling; through what was left of Belgium, through Luxembourg, into Germany. Our route haid been carefully mapped out by a tourist agency, and we saw all the best places. For two days we drove along river-banks: the Moselle, the Rhine; through neat, gracious little villages of pastel-shaded, flower-trimmed houses, nestling on the river's edge under the lee of vine-covered, castle-topped hills.

On the evening of the second day we reached Rothenburg-ob-der-Taube. We went into the town

through a deep archway cut in a thick wall.

Rothenburg, we thought, was pure Grimms' fairy-tale. Odd little twisty turrets and towers sat on the arches over the roadways. Most of the buildings were not later than fifteenth century, and the whole place, with its gilded, wrought-iron signs suspended over the pavements from time-darkened beams, its black and white, carved and turreted Rathaus, its ten-foot-thick arched walls, looked like a setting for a comic opera filmed in Hollywood.

Our hotel put Stratford-on-Avon or Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer to shame. Arriving at dinner-time, we were served with beer soup, venison and

stewed cranberries, and taken upstairs to bedrooms which were spattered with oak beams and fourposter beds. We could scarcely believe it was true.

We were up early the next morning. It was Sunday, and through the quaint, sweet-smelling streets (they smelt of wood fires burning scented logs) the old mellow bells tolled out sonorously. Through all the streets the townspeople hurried to church. Gradually the streets emptied until there was no one about but a few hurrying latecomers.

We stood outside the largest church listening to the music. We were strangely impressed by the

beauty of the singing, of the organ music.

We wandered back towards the main square, towards our hotel. Here, we all agreed, was a backwater of a town, a relic of mediævalism which progress had left untouched. It was quite unspoilt.

And then into the market-place poured a cavalcade of motor-buses. They were painted orange. They drew up in a line, emptying from their bellies a stream of tourists, clutching cameras, handbags,

sunshades and sunglasses.

Tourists ourselves, we nevertheless resented this intrusion.

Sadly we turned and walked away. Behind us we could hear strident voices, eagerly exclaiming:

"Say, Gertie, isn't this the cutest place? I hope the shops are open Sundays; we must certainly send home some souvenirs and picture postcards. They'd never believe that there really is a place like this, so completely unspoilt."

RECIPES

BEER SOUP

Crumble up the insides of 2 slices of bread and put them in a stewpan with 2 pints of German beer. Beer-lovers may say this is a sacrilege, but you can tell them there is plenty more beer left in the cupboard. Stir all the time you are bringing to a boil, adding meanwhile a little powdered ginger. At the same time, if you can do more than one thing at once, like knitting and reading, fry a bandful of caraway seeds in 1 ounce of butter. Drain them well and put them into the stewpan. Season, and cook for a quarter of an hour. Beat the yolks of 2 eggs till your arm aches, put them in the warmed soup tureen, and pour the soup over.

VENISON

A haunch of venison is the best joint, and there are people who say the buck makes better eating than the doe, but they are obviously not feminists. The knuckle-bone should be removed, and if you have a man who is any use around the house, that's a nice little job for him. You can get him to beat the joint, too; but, if he's had enough, better do it yourself.

After that you leave the venison lying around for several days in a basin which contains, besides the venison, 3 parts water to 1 part wine vinegar, fresh herbs, a sprig of fir-tree, 2 cut-up onions, peppercorns and cloves. Turn

the meat two or three times a day.

This all requires careful organisation, so that you manage to have people to dinner the night you have cooked the joint. If you've picked your day right, dry the joint and oil it well with clarified butter. Cover with

well-greased paper. Make a thick flour-and-water paste, daub this over the grease-paper, cover with another well-greased paper, and tie all together. It will take three or four hours for the venison to cook, and, as you have to baste it every so often, you will have to stick around. It is for an occasion like this that this kind of cook-book will come in handy. You can read the stories in between bastings.

Half an hour before it is ready, take off the wrappings, powder the venison with flour (your face may need attention too), and baste with butter until the outside goes brown. Serve very hot with cranberry jelly or stewed cranberries, well drained, or even red currant

jelly would do at a pinch.

CHAPTER XI

French Provincial

hotel drinking wine. The hotel only had one star against it in the Guide Michelin, but the wine would have passed anywhere in the world.

The patron of the hotel stood beside us on the doorstep. He had immense moustaches and a straw hat. He owned a vineyard, and in between telling us about it he went back, every so often, to spit into the wash-basin. This was a demonstration for our benefit, we felt. The roadway in front of the English must not be defiled.

He owned racehorses, too, he told us. He had sold one the week before for forty thousand francs. Probably he was the mayor of the town, too.

We sat on the pavement partly because we liked it and partly because there was nowhere else to sit

in the hotel except the dining-room.

Certainly there was a salon on the first floor, but it was equally certain that no one used it except for

family weddings, or maybe funerals.

It was triangular, with lace-trimmed, plushbobbled windows against which were arranged, geometrically, two armchairs and a settee of mahogany and plush. The rest of the matching suite was placed at intervals round the wall. Two oil lamps of coloured china and filigree brass stood on the white marble mantelshelf, though there was now electric light in the hotel. Between them a carved naked woman laboured under the weight of a handless clock, and on the ornamented upright piano Aphrodite rose from the foam. Another statue of the Three Graces stood on a pedestal in the corner, partially obscuring one of the gilt-framed oil paintings with which the yellow brocaded wallpaper was largely covered.

We had dined well the night before, eating trout, newly caught and cooked in a hollowed-out aubergine. The wine from the patron's own vineyard was tenpence a bottle. It was a non-classified wine of the Bordeaux district, and it was better, a good

deal, than champagne.

The Guide Michelin, we felt, did its job badly. I would have given that hotel a four star plus. For the wine alone.

RECIPES

TROUT IN AUBERGINE

The trout were small enough to fit into a boat of aubergine cut in half and with their middle bits scooped out. They were seasoned, spread with butter and bread-crumbs and baked in the oven.

I once went to a party where everything was green. It was a hot day and made a cool party. As far as I remember, we started with some sort of green salad – probably

avocado on lettuce. The next course was green trout, and there was a pistachio ice at the end trimmed with grapes. This is what the fish was like:

GREEN TROUT

Mashed potatoes were coloured green with a little spinach water. Chopped-up gherkins (pickled), cucumber and artichoke bottoms were used, and the whole shaped into a mound on which was laid a salmon trout. Mayonnaise, which had been made with green tarragon mustard and contained chopped tarragon and chervil, was poured over.

CHAPTER XII

Black Eyes: Villa d'Este, Como

E were seven when we arrived at the Villa d'Este, Como, very late one night. That day we had driven from Merano, where Marigold had made the fourth girl. It was a longish, mountainous drive, and we were tired; especially Nigel, who had been driving. We went straight to bed without exploring.

I woke at seven. From where I lay in bed I could see the sun glinting on the water. It was the light that had wakened me. I got up to pull the curtain, and the view was so lovely that I stayed to look at the cypresses partly reflected in the mist-veiled water, the roses on the terrace. And then, of course, it was too late to go back to bed again.

I put on my bathing-dress and a dressing-gown. Servants were dusting the lounge as I passed through, and a gardener was tidying up the flower-beds; otherwise there was no one about. Over parts of the lake a wispy morning mist shivered and disappeared. The water looked clear and cold.

I swam out to the raft which was moored close to the shore. It was still dewy wet, and I lay face downwards on it looking out towards the far shore of the lake. The sun was warm and gentle at this time of the day; it had not the power to burn

fiercely as it would do at mid-day.

I lay there for a long time, and was warmed right through and almost fell asleep again. I didn't hear anyone dive. The first thing I knew, there was a brown, hairy young man dripping on the raft. He shook his hair, which was long, first so that it hung forward over his eyes, then, with a movement of his neck, back into place again. He smoothed it back with his fingers. He smiled, and his teeth were white against his brown skin.

"You are up early," he said, in almost perfect

American.

I smiled sleepily, and he asked me when I had arrived. "I am Pito Ansaldi," he said, and I told

him my name.

That night there was a gala. It was a gala because it was Saturday. They erected a dance-floor out in the middle of the terrace, and put tables round it and made a three-sided marquee for the band.

The Italian, Pito Ansaldi, asked me to dance. He brought up his friends, who were all tall and good-looking and sunburnt and Italian. They had names like Toni and Giovannino and Renzo and Piero. Some of them had golden-fair hair, and we asked these ones if they, too, were Italian. In their neat drawled American they said they were.

Lois, who was a romantic, didn't like the Italians, and she resented the gala. She wandered away, outside the range of the trumpets, over to the far corner of the garden, where a willow-tree cascaded over a seat. She sat there and listened to the lapping

of the water on the shore, the plop of the fish, some people out on the lake in a boat singing arias from opera in throaty tenors, and, behind everything, a background of sound, crickets chirruping.

The red Venetian palazzo on the left dipped deep into the water. One lamp on the wall glowed pink. The lights at the end of the lake seemed very far

away....

Pito was very much taken with Valerie. They too went out into the garden, but not to look at the lake. They came to the seat where Lois was sitting; it was a favourite seat of his. He peeped in through the trailing branches, saw that it was occupied, and went on to another seat further along.

Of our three men, Guy danced with some American girls, Nigel made up a quarrel he had had with Marigold. Mark was very unhappy: rightly so,

for we were behaving abominably.

He tried to make us go to bed at twelve, when the band moved indoors to the small bar, but the Italians were too many for him.

"I've booked a tennis-court for nine," he threatened. It was his last attempt to keep his

party under his control.

Mark didn't like the Villa d'Este. I've wondered sometimes why he let us stay so long. The Italians swarmed round his favourite companions like cats around a mouse, like mice around cheese. They came from Milan in low, fast cars. They arrived every afternoon at five or six, and so presumably they left every night. Very late it must have been; they were always there when I went to bed.

There is a nice, straight road between Como and Milan, for Mussolini, besides what he has done to make the trains run on time, has also done things about the roads, they do say.

Pito was the only one of all the young Italians

who was staying in the hotel.

One night none of them came, and even Pito drove off to Milan. Family affairs, we were told. Valerie was very cross that night. She wished she had been nicer to the Austrians whom Lois and I had lately been encouraging. Everyone else was happy again, and we all agreed to hire a boat to take us up the lake next day.

Pito was back in time to go with us. Certainly we didn't invite him to go, but perhaps Valerie did. In any case, it was hardly necessary to invite

Pito. If he wanted to go, he went.

We had planned to visit a villa in which Marigold had recently been staying. It was closed now, its owners had gone, but she had telephoned the caretakers, who had promised to give us lunch.

We landed at the landing-steps, which were at the very gates of the Villa Madronella. Mark sent the boat away. The wrought-iron gate was so large and formidable that it looked like the gate out

of Eden. It was locked.

Marigold explained that possibly she had forgotten to explain to the caretaker that we should arrive from the lake. She and Nigel climbed over the eight-foot gate and disappeared up the winding path.

The rest of us bathed while they were gone. The water was clearer here than it was further down the

lake; it was quite transparent, and it was warm and cold in layers.

Presently Marigold and Nigel came back with the key. It was the largest key I have ever seen. They

unlocked the gate.

The garden was on the side of a hill and cut into terraces. The path which led up through it had rough steps which were just far enough apart so that the steps came on the same foot each time. The path was bordered with strange, sweet-smelling, half-wild flowers. On one level there was a natural grotto. From the rock a trickle of water dripped into a green-slimed pool. On the next terrace there were six tall cypress-trees in a neat row. Cypresses are very tidy trees.

On the top terrace of all, a trestle table shaded under a pergola was set with a coloured cloth. There was a big pot of honey on it and some spiced

current bread and a bowl of butter.

The house was L-shaped. There was a fountain, which had recently been turned on in honour of our arrival. On the wall above the fountain were the words:

By running waters, To whose falls Melodious birds Sing madrigals.

"Spenser?" I asked doubtfully, but nobody knew and I have never remembered to look it up.

We went inside the villa. It smelt like a church. Marigold apologised for it, and said that it looked very fine when flowers and cushions were about.

I liked it very well the way it was, and from the windows – and some of them had Romeo and Juliet balconies, rose-covered – you could see down both arms of the lake: down one side to Como and the Villa d'Este, down the other to Lecco, where the weather comes from.

We went into the kitchen, which was very large. The caretakers, Mario and Maria, had prepared for us a great dish of spaghetti and tomatoes. It smelt faintly of garlic and cheese and it made us feel hungry. We went out on to the pergola-covered terrace and Mario brought out the very large dish of spaghetti, and we ate all of it, and the spiced currant bread, and the honey too. Valerie took a photograph of Guy, who had never learnt to manage spaghetti, with a beard of it hanging down his face.

Afterwards we slept.

Later, when the boat came back, we went over to Menaggio for tea. We stayed longer than we meant to, and it got dark before we were half way back.

The lake was lovely in the dark. The black mountains on each side were faintly etched against the skyline: fingers of light shimmered on the water and flickered through the blackness of the mountain to gather together in greater numbers where the houses, faintly phosphorescent, edged the lake. There were white pin-points of light, dim orange squares, red and green landing-lights. Sometimes a searchlight would sweep over the lake and disappear along the road, and we would hear the dim vibrations of the motor-car behind it. The lights of boats melted past us very quickly.

In the back of the boat Valerie said: "It's pretty, isn't it?"

Guy and Marigold sang "Body and Soul" and "Mr. Blankenstein" a little out of tune, and Nigel joined in. Alone in the bows of the boat, listening to the chuckling of the water against the boat, breathing the warm scent of tuberoses brought by the soft night wind from all the gardens on the shore, the romantic Lois could have murdered them.

I sat on the roof of the cabin with Pito, to give Mark a break with Valerie, and let the wind blow through my hair.

"Where did you all go last night?" I asked

Pito.

"To Milano. There was a big party for a wedding. A cousin of mine is going to marry a cousin of Giovanni's. You know?"

"So some of you do get married? I thought you must be a community of bachelors: so many attractive young men and none of you married."

Pito laughed. "They are not bringing their wives to Villa d'Este," he said. "Too many pretty American girls; too much fun. I am not married, though. I am the only one that isn't. Perhaps I marry Valerie, hm?"

"Would you like to?"

He thought for a moment. "No," he said finally. "English girls, American girls, are very nice to flirt with, though. Perhaps I am going to Rome and marry a girl I know there. The girls from Milano will not now marry me."

"Your reputation there too bad?" I asked.

"Well, I haven't been there for a long, long time

until last night. Now I don't go again for a long, long time. Perhaps I go to Rome to-day, or to Capri or Brioni. They're all mad at me in Milano. Perhaps I am telling you the story; it's quite funny. "You see, when I am arriving at this party last

"You see, when I am arriving at this party last night all the women give me very black looks. I think – thought – at first it is because I am not there for so long a time. Some of them are my cousins, and one girl I might have married once; but no. So I set to work to be nice to all of them in turn to make my peace. But each one frowns at me and looks very black, and I wonder what I shall do to make it up, because it is too bad that all the wives of my friends should look so black at me.

"Then I get on one side my cousin who is going to marry Giovanni's cousin, and my cousin has always been great friends with me, so I ask her what it is that is the trouble with all the women that they are giving me such black looks? She is laughing and saying to me, 'I do not blame them. When I am married to my Dario I am taking great care to keep him away from you.' And I am asking why, so she is telling me. You see, quite often, nearly every night in the summer, the husbands are not coming home for dinner in the evening; three, four nights a week they are out, and always Saturdays. And they are coming home very late at night, and sometimes they are a little drunk, you know. Absolutely. And every one that is coming home late is blaming it off on me. Each one is saying, 'That Pito Ansaldi, he is such a good fellow, I can't resist to go with him and have just one little drink. The stories he tells, ha-ha, and then never

is he letting us come home until very late. He is such a good fellow.' So after a time the wives are getting together and cursing the name of Pito Ansaldi, who is keeping all their husbands from going home at the night-time, so that is why they are giving me the very black looks."

I laughed. "And so that's why you can't go

back to Milan any more?"

"Oh, no," said Pito, "absolutely not. That is not the reason. The reason is for what I did at the party. You see, I am thinking that I will pay back my friends for all these very black looks their wives are giving me. So I stand up on a chair in the middle of the floor and thank everyone for welcoming me back in such a splendid fashion. I say that in the past four months I have been thinking of them very often, and that it has been very lonely in England not seeing any of my friends for so long a time. So you see that is why I am not going back to Milano. I am getting more than black looks this time; I am getting black eyes."

RECIPES

SPICED BREAD

Here's a recipe for spiced bread, but whether it is the same recipe that was used at Madronella I hesitate to say. All I know is that I found it out afterwards.

You get ½ pound of cornflour and add 3 tablespoonfuls of sugar. Make a well in the centre (I love recipes that start that way; it is just the way I used to make sand puddings when I was so high) and drop in 1 egg and 3

ounces of butter. Mix them all together (that's where the fun comes in), and then add enough warm milk to form a stiff paste. Put in 1 ounce of stoneless sultanas and 1 ounce of stoneless raisins, a little finely chopped candied peel and a handful of well-chopped almonds. Myself, I find it wise to get twice the quantity of these last ingredients for I always eat quite that many in the process. When you have the whole lot mixed and formed into a flat loaf, bake until brown in a moderate oven.

MADRONELLA SPAGHETTI

1 pound spaghetti
Juice from tin of tomatoes,
or ½ pint juice of fresh tomatoes
½ pound butter
½ pound grated Parmesan cheese
¾ cloves garlic

Strain the juice of the tomatoes, add pint water, bring to the boil. Throw in the spaghetti, add pepper and salt, butter, garlic, stick of rosemary. Boil quickly for fifteen to twenty minutes until juice is almost used up (watch out that the spaghetti does not stick to the pan).

The spaghetti may be served with the cheese separately, or it may be put in a casserole, the cheese sprinkled on it, a few scraps of butter placed on top, and the whole placed in an oven for three or four minutes.

CHAPTER XIII

Je n'ai jamais vu Carcassonne

CARCASSONNE, we thought, was older than Rothenburg, but more self-conscious about it.

It is the remains of a tenth- or eleventh-century fortification, a city surrounded by towers and turrets of the Romanesque period.

Now there is very little that is genuine left. Outwardly the toy forts are much the same, but it has all had its face lifted and the result is too perfect. It is commercialised antiquity, advertised and living on its reputation, like an elderly actress.

I took some photographs, but, when they were developed and printed, nobody even believed them. It couldn't be a real place, they argued. It was a photograph of a model, or a child's fort. They were quite convinced of it.

So I have always felt, in the words of the sad old gentleman in the poem I used to recite as a child, who has seen this, and done that, but finally dies with, on his lips, his constantly reiterated wail: "Je n'ai jamais vu Carcassonne."

RECIPE

ONION SOUP

You may not feel deeply about onions the way I do. Why, I even weep while I'm peeling them, I care so. If not, pass up this recipe and serve tomato soup out of a can, in your usual catch-as-catch-can manner. But, if you are one of our gang, take 4 onions and cook very gently in 2 ounces of butter. They should not get brown. Pour over 1 pint milk and ½ pint stock. Add slices of fine crustless bread and ½ pound of grated Gruyère cheese; add a pinch of mace, cayenne pepper, ½ a bay leaf. Bring to the boil and cook slowly for three-quarters of an hour. Beat the yolks of 3 eggs in a cup of milk. Add to the soup, stirring gently, strain, and serve immediately, giving yourself the biggest helping.

CHAPTER XIV

Escape from Biarritz

were none of us so crazy about Biarritz; there was too much of it, you could never find anyone. There was nothing quite real about it except the heat, and there had been heat at other

places. Cannes, for instance.

We were handicapped a good deal by having lost the luggage. In fact, we had lost not only the luggage but the car it was in, and English, and Maisie the maid, with them. More accurately, perhaps, they lost us. They turned up after three days, but three days in the heat with nothing but a dusty travelling-suit to wear is no fun at all.

I once knew a couple who went to Biarritz for their honeymoon. It was in the middle of winter, and Biarritz in winter is very, very bleak. There is a wind that comes across the Atlantic, and if you haven't been told that America is on the other end

of the wind you would credit the Antarctic.

There are a lot of excellent hotels in Biarritz, but the one they went to was not one of them. They had been handed it by a tourist agency and it sounded good and grand. It had one of those names with a lot of words in it, something like Grand Hôtel de la France, de l'Atlantique, et de l'Après-Midi d'un Faune, and it had bugs in the beds.

Besides the wind, it rained very hard all day, and they decided to ignore the tourist agency and go all on their own to Cannes for the rest of the honeymoon.

They tell this story with a great deal of raw detail, but I always maintain that it was just as bad for me to be in Biarritz during a heat-wave with nothing to wear but a tweed suit. After all, I couldn't even

go to Cannes; I had just come from there.

We stayed in a villa at Biarritz. It was a nice villa, built like a Swiss chalet, with a sloping roof and balconies all round. But it was a long, long way from the sea and no nearer a bit of open country. It was in a street of other houses, and it had a small garden, and it suited our host very well, because almost nobody, unless they were as determined as I am, would walk the three miles to the sea in that heat, even to bathe.

So we would start out in the car from the villa about eleven o'clock and we would drive all round the town, which was hot and modern, and we would do a lot of shopping for food and other things. And sometimes our host would go and have his hair cut and we would sit in the car and wait for him.

Then we would finally get to one of the beaches. There are five beaches in Biarritz, and, whichever one you go to, you always think another one would have been better.

That year the beach we most often went to was named, quite inaccurately, the Chambre d'Amour.

It was the least attractive beach of all, because there seemed to be some sort of oil works there, or maybe they were sifting for gold, but, either way, they used a lot of very conspicuous machinery. It was the furthest away, too, but nearly everyone went there.

We were so glad to get to any beach by then (it was usually about a quarter to one) that we didn't worry about which one, but just flung our clothes off (in the buildings properly labelled) and went into the sea.

We hadn't been out of the sea very long before Valerie started to collect a crowd. And then our host would remember that it was time for lunch, so we would pile into the car again, which by then had got very hot inside and burnt us quite considerably, and drove back to the villa for lunch.

Our host didn't bathe, so we quite saw that the time we spent on the beach was almost a total loss to him, except for watching the pretty girls sunbathe. On the other hand, the rest of the day was not so very entertaining to us. His hobbies were shopping and going out for tea, and we did plenty of both of those.

Tea was usually at the Chiberta Golf Club, which was all right in its way, but rather too dressy. As for the shopping, it had little to recommend it – not even what we bought, which, judging by what subsequently appeared on the lunch-table, was scrambled eggs, quite old hens, and éclairs. We always miscounted and bought too few éclairs, or it may be that the shop had run out, but it wasn't really important, because I've never cared at all for éclairs.

After a few days, Valerie, who sized things up pretty quickly, discarded all of the crowd that swarmed round her on the beach except those that had Bentley motor-cars. These soon made her independent; they used to line up outside the villa

at the most improbable times of the day.

She had a good nose for a Bentley, and could even tell the owner of one when he had his car quite safely parked in a garage. These young Bentley Boys were very quickly lured towards her either on the beach or in some of the places we frequented in the evenings. (There was one place I remember, an open-air dance haunt called the Casanova, run by White Russians in elegant grey uniforms.) Mostly the young men employed the we-must-have-met-before technique, which she understood very well how to handle with enough coolness but not too much.

Marigold got herself fixed up too, though with an inferior brand of motor-car. Even Lois collected some sort of small French chuff-chuff machine. As for me, I walked, as often as not, or drove with

Nigel in the luggage-car.

The party began to get a little disorganised. Guy had to go back to work about this time, and Nigel collected a pretty Austrian girl and, also for business reasons, took the morning air-liner back to London. The Austrian girl was sick all the way, and moaned, "I die, I die," at such frequent intervals that Nigel began to wish she would go ahead and do it, but that is another story.

Lois's young man then left for Paris, and that left us a little short-handed, except for Valerie's

collection, which she labelled rightly: "Strictly Private." One of them, in fact, asked me to go out with him one night, but Valerie saw him at cocktail time, and I sat at home alone that evening.

We had still another week to go, but before that

we went.

One morning Valerie climbed into the largest of the Bentleys, said she was off for Paris, and disappeared in a puff of dust. Lois and I, arranging to meet her there, took the train and went too. Looking back on it, I see no excuse for this behaviour, unless it was the éclairs, which nobody cared for very much any more. And I didn't even have that much of an excuse, because I never had liked them and had quite often broken into the kitchen late at night and cooked up a crêpe suzette for Nigel and myself, or anyone else who happened to be around.

Not that our host didn't do his best to entertain us in a manner to which none of us had been accustomed. For myself, though, I was entertained too much. My idea of a holiday at the beach is to lie out on the beach in a state of coma most of the day, with intervals for cooling off in the sea on a surf-board.

So we all arrived in Paris. Lois and I were met at the station by Lois's foreign young man, and by

Henry, to whom I'd wired my arrival.

I don't remember that any of us mentioned to our host that we intended to stop over in Paris. The idea that we conveyed was that we should go straight on, after not more than a few hours in the city. He had suggested that Lois and I should stop

overnight to meet Valerie and take her straight on back to England with us, and we probably agreed to this.

Our third night in Paris we all got together and for some reason dined at Prunier's; which is where all English people dine in Paris when they can't think of anywhere else.

We had ordered our meal, and were just settling

down to the drinking.

"No scrambled eggs," said Lois.

"No éclairs," I added.

"Supposing he could see us now," giggled Valerie.

I looked towards the door, almost as if I had expected him to come in. And there he was, still in his travelling-clothes, looking round the room. He saw us, and came over and sat down to dinner with us. He'd fully expected to catch us out, he said. He knew Paris and he knew us. We laughed a good deal and pretended it was all a joke.

But we knew we'd been pretty poor creatures.

I was going on to a theatre with Henry and catching the early morning plane. So I said good-bye to our host and thanked him again.

He didn't pay much attention to me, though. He was too busy counting out the notes for his bill.

RECIPES

CREPES SUZETTE

There is no time to make crêpes suzette as good as at night. Crêpes suzette need a certain mood, and this mood is apt to be disturbed if the cook is still hovering

protectively about the kitchen, or is apt to burst in at any moment. Nor is it any use to order the cook to make them. At the best they will turn out to be ordinary pancakes, and at the worst you may have to dispose of them secretly, burying them in the garden or feeding them to the dog.

You have to look around the kitchen and find some nice clean frying-pans. One would do, but four would be ideal. And a palette-knife – a flat, bendable palette-knife with a rounded end which you can slip under the edge of the pancake to turn it dextrously. Tossing a crêpe suzette is by no means as easy as tossing an ordinary pancake, and I'm not sure if it is even possible. Also you will need to have, if obtainable, one of those metal dishes that have a spirit flame growing underneath them.

Begin with the sauce. Grind 2 lumps of sugar strenuously against an orange, another 2 against a lemon. Put them in a small pan cracked up a little, and add a chunk of butter, a measure of Cointreau, and a measure of Benedictine. Melt this slowly so that it won't burn or stick to the pan.

To mix the batter you break an egg in a bowl and pour in a cup of milk. Mix them well together. Then you add flour a little at a time until you have a thin batter. Some people do it the other way around, starting with the flour; please yourself.

It is not possible to explain just how thin the batter should be. If it is too thin the crêpes will break and if it is too thick they'll just be Yorkshire pudding.

Prepare your pan or pans by wiping well with butter, then pour in a little of the mixture so that it barely covers the bottom of the pan, and cook it over a low flame. When it gets a golden brown on one side, you turn it gingerly with the palette-knife. Till you know, you have to keep peeking to see when it is brown, but experience helps you to judge by the top, which goes dry and a

little bubbly. When both sides are done the crêpe is finished and should be stacked on a warm plate and covered soon by other crêpes.

You can then carry the whole outfit into another room, adding to your collection a bottle of cognac, and some

spoons and forks and plates for eating with.

You heat up the metal dish on the spirit stove and pour the sauce into it. Then you twist the suzette over twice (not three times; that would make a roll, whereas you want one piece of them left unrolled), dip it around in the sauce, move it to one end, and so on until all your crêpes are in the dish. Sift sugar on them and pour cognac over the lot. Wait till it heats and set fire. You get the best taste letting the cognac burn itself out.

ECLAIRS

To me there is something peculiarly nauseating about the combination of the thick, vanilla-scented, whipped-up near-cream which soggily fills a sticky chocolate éclair. Others may like it, and evidently do, and, as far as I am concerned, they can have it. For me, I think a much less sickly and more delicious filling for éclairs is a light cream cheese (at my shop they call them petits Suisses), with which has been mixed whole, wild strawberries, or even chopped-up tame strawberries. For the winter, bananas or cherries are better than nothing.

CHAPTER XV

Winter Sport

is the sort of day on which Scott discovered the Antarctic," remarked Micky, rubbing the steaming window.

Snowflakes whirled thickly round the chalet, completely obscuring the mountains across the

valley.

"Hopeless to think of going out," he continued.

"One would almost get lost on the nursery slopes.

Besides, I do like to know whether I'm ski-ing uphill or down. Can anyone suggest a popular

indoor sport?"

He glanced inquiringly round the room. Slouched in, or perched on, all the available chair-space were the more resigned of the party. The others were, like Micky, gazing hopelessly out of the windows. They all wore ski-ing clothes, but, as there were limits even to heartiness, most of them had on bedroom slippers instead of the usual clumpy, square-toed boots.

"Why don't you wax your skis?" asked Jeremy helpfully. He was, at the moment, arranging two wooden armchairs back to back, and spreading their seats with out-of-date numbers of *The Times*. As a precaution, he laid the sheets several layers deep, because every now and then someone would

be sure to glance over his arrangements casually and remove one of the sheets to read over last month's Court Circular, or the advertisements for luxury flats.

Micky watched him lazily.

"I know an even better idea. Seeing you've appropriated all the space, and have probably got the only wax in the establishment, suppose you do them for me? They'll need it; the snow will be frightfully slow this afternoon if it clears up."

"Hand 'em over," said Jeremy briefly. "I'll make them so fast that you'll damn' well fall on

your face."

"Friendly little fellow," said Micky. "Now, what else shall we do?"

"My God," said Jeremy, and threw a bit of wax

at him.

"You might go down to the station to see if anyone amusing arrives on the morning train,"

suggested someone.

"That's a silly idea," Micky replied. "Even if the Lord himself were coming I shouldn't care. Especially if he'd thought of sharing my bathroom. This station fetish ought to be suppressed. While we're here we spend a large portion of our time on the railway platform meeting people whom we would, on the whole, be happier without; certainly more comfortable. (It's no fun for me since Archie arrived and I have to stand in a queue every morning while he gargles his bath-water.) For days we waste time burbling insincerities as they fall out of the train. You know: 'My dear, I am so glad you've come. I shall so enjoy carrying your skis and your

beer-bottle up all the highest peaks.' Then they'll start to go away again, and we shall stand shivering on the cold platform longing for our cocktail, already overdue, and ask for their addresses, which we hope we shall lose, and – of course, you know, the trouble is, we're getting too civilised."

"The trouble is," said his sister, "that you talk

too much."

"Well, well," replied Micky.

I sat in the very middle of the room feeling happy. Every time I looked out of the window I had a hard time to keep the smile of satisfaction off my face. The snowstorm looked so pleasantly perma-

nent; it might go on for days.

It was not very often that I had the chance of being in the centre of things. I have often wondered what possessed me, with my careful lifted stems, stop turns, and even more frequent stop sits, to join a party which included five of the British ski team (two of them women) and a handful of others who had only just missed getting in, and always might next year.

The women weren't even unattractive. There was Hilary, who was dark, vivid, with a natural colour and an excitable manner. Elfie was tall, but the smallness of her bones, her neat, pointed face and fly-away ash-blonde hair, made her look fragile,

a little brittle.

Joan, who had just not made the team, was a little more hearty, looked more as if she played for a women's hockey team; but her hands and feet were not large, and her eyes were good.

All three of them looked their best on skis. They

ski'd hatless and without coats, bright-coloured, neat shirts tucked into dark trousers. They looked

like the mascots on the front of racing-cars.

So that I was certainly the only one of the whole party who welcomed the snow, and not only for its social levelling qualities. I thought with relief of the slowing up of the dangerously fast Gluwein Run, which pride forced me to undertake at least twice a day. A sweet, soft cushion of snow would cover the ice path which I had found so painful for the last week. I thought of the gentle telemark turns I would be able to practise in soft snow, instead of those elusive, hair-raising downhill turns which I was told were the only sort for hard snow.

But, even as I was trying to prevent Jeremy from waxing my skis, my good, safe, slow-running skis, along with those of the rest of the party, the snow thinned out and a chink of blue sky showed through the grey.

By one o'clock it was almost clear. The others got packages of lunch together, pulled themselves into their boots, and departed. I decided to have my lunch in the sunshine outside the Palace Hotel, and I climbed up the steep path to the

skating-rink.

Men were already at work on the ice with scrapers, and by the time I had fixed myself up with a plate of cold meat and two sorts of salad a few skaters were already on the rink. The pleasant chink-chink of their skates sounded high notes against the deep accompaniment of the ice-scraper, the deeper roar of distant avalanches.

"The south slopes will be dangerous to-day," I remarked to a fellow-luncher.

"They always are after a snowstorm," he said.

Behind the clearing sheet of ice rose the steep curves of the nursery slopes. At Mungenwald even the nursery slopes were more difficult than the

steepest runs of other winter sports centres.

Behind the nursery slopes ran the funicular, climbing abruptly until it disappeared into a tunnel. I could imagine the eager crowd on the little station platform, all of them trying to crowd into the sloping carriages, to get their skis and their sticks in with them without giving anyone a black eye.

The blue-white peaks of the mountain range opposite jagged through the white fluff of clouds which still lined the valley, cut into the new-blue of the sky. There was no doubt about it, Mungenwald must have been a fine place to be in before the

English took it over.

All the afternoon I sat in the sunshine, happy and lazy, thinking how nice Switzerland must have been

when the Swiss owned it.

Switzerland is probably the most beautiful country in the world, both climatically and scenically. The only thing that is wrong with it is the Swiss, who are so obstinately friendly to foreigners that they allow their country to be owned by them, in chunks. The Swiss are even hotel-keepers to the League of Nations, and, for all one ever hears of them in that connection, they may not even be members of the League.

It is really very odd that the Swiss should be such

a subservient, below-stairs sort of people, considering how stimulating the air of their country is to the people of other nations (particularly to middle-

aged English spinsters).

I never heard of a battle of Mungenwald, so I suppose the English just took possession of the town quite peaceably, appropriating the natives for use as slaves. A certain Sir Henry Lunn is thought to have headed the troops. Mr. T. Cook was probably his lieutenant.

They, the British, have certainly given the place a high atmosphere of British ruling-class sports-

manship, a public-school spirit.

In fact, if you have not been to an English public school (or are not the daughter or wife of someone who has) you are not allowed to stay in the best hotels, or the chalets which are attached to them, use the ice rink, or join in the club races (or, for that matter, join the clubs). There are inferior hotels, which possibly have clubs of their own, for foreigners and other strangely educated

people.

There is a form which you fill in in England some time before you intend to go to Switzerland. And if you fill it in in the right way, and are approved by the right people, you may be allowed to pay a guinea in advance and join the Public Schools Club. In which case you would almost certainly be allowed to book a room in a hotel at Mürren, Wengen, Scheidegg, Mungenwald, or one or two other selected ski-ing centres. You pay for this in advance, too.

There were two ski-ing clubs recognised at

Mungenwald when I was last there. Foremost was the Death and Glory, which, even if you had the correct social qualifications, was difficult of attainment. Without its silver badge pinned to your bosom you were of very lowly status. With its gold badge, which was worn by few who were not also internationals, you were somebody indeed. If under the gold badge you wore a British University Ski Club sweater, or above it a British Ski-ing Club tie, you were a god. Micky and Jeremy both hailed from Olympus. That both of them were also members of the British aristocracy was really of secondary importance.

The second club was for beginners (again of the right British social status) whose first year it was at Mungenwald. It was called the Sink or Swim. To join it you needed nothing in the way of ski-ing except courage and the balance to take the nursery slopes straight without falling. Only the merest novice, the most ignorant new arrival, wore the Sink or Swim badge on his coat for more than a few days. It was bad enough to be a rabbit with-

out advertising the fact.

As long as the sun shone on to the seats beside the skating-rink I basked in it. The temperature may have been below freezing-point. The heat of the sun burning down on me made it feel like a

tropical June.

When the sun went behind the mountains I collected my skis and went for a run. It was mainly to work up an appetite for tea, which was the best meal of the day: strong, rich chocolate heaped with whipped cream, creamy butter on crisp brioches,

and, best of all, Swiss black cherry jam, made it a

meal worth working for.

At tea, conversation at the chalet was almost entirely about the condition of the snow. I didn't join in, because how was I, who had never even won a beginner's slalom, to know about such things?

I had some news for later, though.

"Did you know, Micky" – I dropped my bombshell casually – "that the Swiss have arranged a race for Sunday to take place over the same course that you've arranged for Monday's race?"

"You don't mean that?" asked Micky, half laughing. And the others all looked incredulous.

"Some new sort of joke, I presume?"

"It's true enough," I said, and stuffed a roll of bread into my mouth to stop myself from laughing aloud at the consternation which was spreading over all their faces. "Hans Schmitt told me when I called at the shop for my skis."

Micky gulped down the last mouthful of his

chocolate and burnt his tongue a little.

"I must go and see him about it at once," said Micky. "Come on, Jeremy, you'd better come too. We can't allow this sort of thing. If the Swiss start thinking they can mess up all our slopes whenever they feel like it, it will be serious. You never know where a thing like that might lead..."

CHAPTER XVI

Love and War: Rome

If you are a female of any age under a hundred with a (more or less) secret sorrow, which you had intended to nurse with an aloof, calm dignity of bearing, it is no use at all to try to do it on an Italian boat. I've tried it, and I know.

You will only have to sit around on deck with your eyes closed, a look of sad resignation shining through the lids, and you will have half of the male population of the boat stealing up to take photographs, or anything else they can get away with. You only have to go to bed at night a little earlier than the rest of the ship to have the second head steward rattle sympathetically on your (locked) stateroom door-handle, inquiring after your health and comfort.

You will only have to land for an afternoon walk at one of the ports of call to find your tea already paid for. You will only have to linger for a few moments on arrival at your destination, just long enough to gather your bits and pieces around you, to find yourself in the self-appointed charge of a gallant young Fascist who will decide, without barely consulting you, to see you from Naples to Rome, from Rome and into the Paris Express.

That is, if you are a woman under a hundred with

something a little tragic about your bearing.

We climbed into the train at Naples at a very early hour in the morning, the young Fascist and I, who am not yet a hundred, though sometimes I think it won't be long now, the way I feel.

We had quite a talk from Naples to Rome, or at least he did. He talked of the advantages, the beauties, the necessities of wars; lots of wars; one every ten years, or, at the limit, twenty. I'd never have guessed there was so much in favour of war that I didn't know about.

Arriving in Rome before ten in the morning, we were met by his brother, and the three of us went to the Hotel Excelsior. It was here that my young Fascist planned to stay (I say "Fascist," though, correctly speaking, it in no way distinguishes him from several million ardent young arm-raisers parading the streets of Italy; but this young man wore his black shirt next his soul). He ordered himself a suite. He said he would get a room for me, too, so that I might wash and tidy myself.

It turned out, so he said, that the manager regretted the only suite available was the one which my Fascist was to have. I said that all the washing I needed to do could be gone through in the ladies' cloakroom, but he wouldn't hear of that. There was a sitting-room in his suite, and if I cared to make use of his bathroom, and then rest while he himself washed and put through some telephone calls, he would be most honoured.

So the three of us went upstairs. I thought I knew Italians, but I didn't, it seemed, know them

well enough. Three people in a sitting-room at ten in the morning couldn't have seemed less romantic, but while I was washing (it seemed churlish, as well as a little unclean, to refuse the use of his bathroom) the brother disappeared.

It took quite a while to explain to my Fascist friend that our points of view were not the same in any respect: that war was only one of the things

about which we disagreed.

He was regretful, polite, cold, explaining that it

was only in war that he cared to use force.

The brother was waiting for us downstairs. If he was surprised to see us again so soon he didn't show it. The two of them got a taxi and decided to show me Rome. Or as much of Rome as you can see in two hours. It's quite a good deal.

I have a wild, jumbled recollection of parks on hill-tops with wide views over the city; of a muddy river under bridges; of ruined forums; of the wide, columned space in front of the Vatican and the dome of St. Peter's Church; of statues and of fountains and of new, impressive, tree-spattered avenues.

Then they took me to lunch. We went to a funny little old restaurant which may have been near the Colosseum; they claimed it was one of the best places in Rome. They didn't suggest what I should eat, so I chose fritto misto and zabaglione, because they are the next things after spaghetti and risotto that I order in Italian restaurants in Soho.

Then they took me to the train. The brother strolled away and my Fascist established me in a seat with my back to the engine. It always makes

me sick to travel with my back to the engine, but he explained that that way it is not so dangerous if there should be an accident. I thought that I am sick more often than I am in an accident, but that I could always change over when the train started.

He told me that he would soon come to England, and, with sinister intent in his voice, promised to

see me again.

"But you Englishwomen are so strange," he said sadly. "With you it is the first time you say no, and the second time you say no, and the third time you say maybe. And that way you waste two times."

But, as it turned out, I only ever met him twice...

RECIPES

FRITTO MISTO

Fritto misto is an Italian mixed grill, but it is as different from the English mixed grill as the Italian and English methods of love-making. Fritto misto is light, airy, unexpected, and its intentions are not strictly honourable. It's a pleasant, frolicsome dish, but an English grill is more satisfying for a regular diet.

For four people you may take 4 small fillets of veal, or 4 small lamb cutlets cut from the bone.

One set of calf's brains, or a lamb's sweetbread. Rings of very young marrow or of aubergine. The base of very young Italian artichokes. Small pieces of chicken liver.

pound mushrooms.

Rub the meat lightly with garlic (don't be scared), make a light batter with a flavouring of basil, and dip in all the ingredients, fry in a deep pan of pure olive oil from which a blue smoke is rising (that's important, but you know that already) for a short time until golden brown. The ingredients should be well strained and served immediately. Egg and breadcrumbs may be substituted for batter, but it is hard to do this dish really well without a frying-basket.

ZABAGLIONE

Zabaglione is a typical Italian dish, too, frothy and light-hearted and a little light-headed. You beat the yolks of 3 eggs with 1½ ounces of sugar as if they were little Communists and you a Fascist. You have to beat them till they are almost white with fear. Mix in a gill of Marsala (that should pull them together again). Pour into a saucepan on a quick fire, beating again pretty strenuously. Don't let the mixture thicken or boil. As it rises take it off, pour in large wine-glasses, serve hot or cold.

CHAPTER XVII

Interlude in Naples

Am not surprised now when I meet people who have just come back from Germany claiming they "never noticed anything." Maybe, they admit, there were a few more uniforms than usual, but we never saw a sign of the concentration camps. It is not any use to reply: "But where did you expect to find them? Right in the middle of the central park?" They just didn't see anything; they didn't want to see anything; they weren't looking for anything.

I can understand the way they are too. I went to Italy for years without noticing that anything was going along. If I knew about Fascism at all, I thought it was an odd sort of Government concerned with physical jerks – a sort of grown-up version of the Black Hand Gang of which I had been a dare-devil member when young. It seemed quite a natural kind of game for the Italians to play; they had never seemed to me a very adolescent race.

If there was anything more than that to it, I thought that Fascism was the same sort of thing as Ireland wanting Home Rule, the Ku Klux Klan in America, and the frequent downfall of French Governments. It just proved what irresponsible kids men really were.

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Let them all, I thought, do as they please as long

as they don't get too serious about it.

It was Steve who pointed out that perhaps the Italians didn't please at all but didn't know what to do about it. He said that all the people in Naples looked sad, and when you came to look at them

they did.

I had been working along quite normally in London when I got a wire from Steve telling me to hop on the next train and meet him and some other people in Naples and make a trip to Egypt and Palestine. That is the sort of telegram I always obey (at least, when it comes from Steve), and, after I had convinced the paper that what they really needed to make the sheet complete was a set of shopping articles from Jericho and Jerusalem, I got on board the Rome Express.

To go to Rome on the way to Naples is ordinarily quite a good idea. But that time it was a pretty bad mistake. On account of the Exposition at

Rome.

There was nothing wrong with the Exposition itself, or if there was, I didn't find it. Mainly because I never went there.

I had never even heard of it until I got to Rome and six men started shouting at each other and at me on the platform. I didn't really know much even then.

Once I took a course in Italian lessons out of a book, but in times of emergency it never seems to have amounted to anything. It was only afterwards, when I started to learn Russian, that I could remember nothing but Italian words, but at the time I was

in Rome all I could think of was: "Where is a w.c.? On the fourth floor? Good. Wake me at eight. Good night." And I didn't see how to work that in at this stage.

The porters talked a good deal among themselves, and finally took all my luggage off the train and put it in a waiting-room. So I collected my bits and

pieces and got off the train myself.

I sat around on my typewriter case on the platform and looked helpless. Looking helpless was a good trick I learned when I first had a car that

got punctures.

Presently the six porters brought a man along who explained the whole business. It seemed that nobody was allowed to go through Rome without visiting the Exposition, by order of Mussolini, but that for a consideration he was prepared to pay my visit for me.

I had to give him my ticket and my passport and most of my money and sit down and wait. I tried not to remember the stories of what happens to girls who entrust handsome strangers with their all.

But it just shows that you should have faith in the innate goodness of human beings, because after a while the man came back with the passport and the ticket and even some of the money. I asked him how was the Exposition, but he said that, though he'd visited it no fewer than 500 times, he had never got beyond the door. He just took people's tickets and got them stamped and wrote down the name that was on the passport and came away. I said he ought to watch out, the doorman would be getting

to know him pretty soon; but he said the doorman was his brother-in-law and knew him anyway.

Well, that was how I fooled Mussolini. Not that il Duce cared. I had helped his statistics along even if I hadn't stepped outside the station, and it wasn't

my education that he was worrying over.

Round about midnight we steamed into Naples. Earlier in the day I had wired to two young Italians I knew from other years to come along and meet me (Steve wasn't due in from Majorca until the next morning). As I was several hours later than I'd said I would be, I was surprised that they were there. But it seemed that they, too, knew all about the Exposition at Rome.

They took me to a night-club, which was underground, and we sat there for a while drinking and talking, and then they dropped me back at my hotel

again.

Very early the next morning Steve got in on a boat from the Balearic Islands. It was somewhere about seven o'clock and I had been expecting him for an hour.

After we had talked for a while we went out. The reason I had come away at all was so that I might write shopping stories for the paper, and I am nothing if not conscientious.

Outside the hotel, built almost in the sea, was a great stern castle. It was called Castle of the Eggs.

We wandered down Razor-cut-Naples Street, which presently led into the Way of the Great Tribulations.

This was a narrow and cobbled street and quite a shopping-centre. The meat shops exhibited strange,

stringy-looking meat which all appeared to be insides. The fish in the fish shops was dried, though there must have been plenty of wet fish just outside in the sea. The fruit looked the nicest: lemons and oranges and tangerines all strung on strings like the onions that your Breton onion man brings round. Each fruit had its own leaves still growing on it.

The street was lined with tall, narrow, shuttered houses huddled together. Shopping for the housewife who lived in them was easy. She had a big basket on a rope, and she lowered it down on to the street below. It was passed from stall to stall, and, when she had everything she needed in it, she

hauled it up again.

Meanwhile she hurled down curses from on high. They'd better not try cheating her or she'd hurl

down something more substantial. . . .

After that it was time for lunch. We thought it would be nice to have lunch outside, so we called round to ask my two Italian friends where was the best place. It was too early in the year, they said, to lunch outdoors, but they would do their best.

So they drove us right round the bay till we came to a place named Josepone or Phoney Joseph, I forget which. This was right on the edge of the cliff, and seemed to have been made out of a cave. We went through the kitchen on the way up to the dining-room. There were huge copper pans, very shiny, lining all the walls. And the walls themselves were rough rock, like the walls of a cave.

In person, Phoney Joseph waited on us. He brought us a risotto of fish which I liked very much until I asked what it was, and was told, "Octopus legs."

Then he sang to us. He sang operatic arias with great feeling. Most Neapolitans think they are

second Carusos. P. J. exaggerated.

The table we had was in the window and looked over the bay. It was very blue and sunny. Over on the left, Vesuvius was self-consciously doing its best to improve the landscape by puffing out cotton-wool clouds. The Bay of Naples was so exactly like all the picture postcards of the place that it didn't seem real.

After lunch we left our Italian friends and tried to do some shopping on our own account. The boat was due to sail at five. Steve wanted me to buy some flowers if I would do the talking. I said I would, and tried to think up my phrase-book Italian again. After a while I managed to get out: "Per piacere chiami dottore. Ho mal di testa. Credo che sono ammalato." Which meant please send for a doctor. I have a headache. I think I am ill.

But while they were sending for him Steve bought the flowers by pointing to them and holding out a handful of loose coins. They picked out some Italian pieces from among the other coinage, French, English, and Spanish, and we beat it with the flowers.

It may be that I will never go to Italy again, but if I do I'm going to buy another phrase-book. Or maybe my knowledge of Abyssinian will serve.

RECIPE

FISH RISOTTO

I might as well tell you how to make a risotto out of octopus legs because you never know when you may catch an octopus. At first sight this may not seem very likely, but it happened to me, so why not to you?

This way. I was swimming around quite happily in the neighbourhood of Cap Martin, in the South of France, when suddenly I saw an octopus looking at me. The way it looked at me seemed to be very unfriendly. So I swam to the jetty as quick as I could swim and landed even quicker. And there was the octopus following me.

There were some French taxi-drivers fishing from the jetty, and one had a fish net, in which he landed that

octopus.

I didn't get a chance to cook his legs, though. The French taxi-drivers pulled them all off and swallowed them down, alive and wriggling. Quite a delicacy, they told me.

So if you do catch an octopus but don't manage to secure his legs, you can make this fish risotto with other kinds of fish: small lobsters, Dublin Bay prawns, sprats,

dabs, and so on.

Take the shells and claws of the prawns, the skin and bones of the fish, or the shells of the lobsters and make from them I pint of stock. Chop up \(\frac{1}{2} \) a small onion (or 2 shallots) and a suspicion of garlic (about half a clove: garlic adds that certain something or other, but it's plenty strong). Fry them to golden brown in olive oil, add \(\frac{1}{2} \) pound of Piemonte rice (you can probably still get Italian rice in Soho). Cook it slowly for five minutes, moving it around all the time. Cover with

the boiling stock, which you have previously well seasoned. Stir well, and add more boiling stock each time it is used up, until the rice is cooked and tender. If you are too busy to do all this, you can pour all the boiling stock on at once and simmer until the rice has absorbed the stock; but it will not be quite so good. It should take from twenty to thirty minutes in either case. The fish, prawns, or lobster, which should have been dipped in flour and fried in smoking olive oil until they are brown, are served on the rice.

CHAPTER XVIII

Land of Eternal Sunshine Alexandria

In the American boat in which we had travelled from Naples there was a young married couple. She was a pretty, dark-haired, blue-eyed American girl. He was an Egyptian, handsome, tall, lithe, with well-cut features, wavy dark hair, and a complexion which was about as dark, say, as a sunburnt Spaniard's. They were an

elegant-looking couple.

During the voyage I learned something of their story. He had been studying medicine in America. In Alexandria, where he lived, he had heard of the rich harvest to be reaped from the annual tourist invasion. Tourists, particularly Americans, it seemed, were liable to Egyptian throats, fevers... a young doctor might do well if he possessed an American degree. There were American women who were not unconscious of the charms of handsome, dark-skinned (not too dark) Egyptians. They were nearly all princes, it was said. There had been a movie once about a sheik....

So he had sailed for America, and in medical college he had met another student, a girl from the

south, with a soft, sweet drawl, and a way of looking up with her head tilted sideways while he explained

to her the nature of an experiment.

It was not part of his programme, and probably it was not even wise, but he was a long way from Egypt and from the influence of his family. It was cold during the American winter, and he was a little lonely, so he married her.

She had a little money; when it was added to his they had plenty to live simply, to continue their studies at the medical college. They were very

happy.

He passed his final examinations with honours. She, who during the last year had had only one eye on her medical books while the other watched over the stewpan, was not so lucky. She wanted to stay another year and make sure of her degree this second time, but he was already a little homesick for the smell of the East, the warm sunshine. He felt he could not face another mid-western winter. And, though he did not say so, he fully appreciated that as the wife of an Egyptian there was little likelihood of her ever making practical use of her profession in Egypt.

He told her that she wouldn't need to work when he was established in Alexandria. She would love Egypt, with its eternal sunshine, its palm-trees, its blue Nile, and its historical background. She could settle down and perhaps raise a family, and leave

her work for a time.

She was a little regretful, but very much in love. She would always be able to help him with his work, she reflected. She would be a real com-

panion to him. She said good-bye to her family and friends, and they took a cruise ship bound for

Egypt.

Those of her friends who knew Egypt – and they were not many – shook their heads a little in private. But they said nothing about their misgivings to her. They had tried to warn her before her marriage and she had laughed at them. Aly, she had said, is just like an American, only gentler, more understanding, more cultured. They had gone no further with their warning beyond begging her to keep him in America. And that, at the time of her marriage, she had had every intention of doing. After all, it might be years before they took their degrees.

People on the boat shook their heads too. It wouldn't work; she didn't know what she was letting herself in for. She would be kept indoors with the women of the household. As for the possibility of helping him with his work, it was inconceivable. Also, she would never be allowed to accompany her husband on his amusements. An Egyptian may break every other rule of his religion,

but never that one.

Still she was radiantly happy. Her husband was kind and good to her, he wore American clothes and an American emancipation as if they had been made for him. She would live in an enchanting country with a beautiful climate. And hadn't the Egyptian civilisation been at its height when America was possessed by a handful of savages, when the Britons painted themselves blue?

Then the boat docked.

On board came all the young Egyptian's male relatives to welcome his bride. All except two wore European clothes strangely, and native hats. Two of the poorer relations had no best clothes and had come in the customary nightshirt. Aly, too, had put on his red fez, and with it a slightly different, barely perceptible change of manner. He was repatriated.

He talked to his relatives, and they all talked back at once in a harsh, stammering staccato language. His wife looked on, a little bewil-

dered.

She walked over to the side of the ship which was edged up against the quay. A cold wind blew swirls of dust round the corners. Then it began to rain. The rain changed to sleet.

Land of Eternal Sunshine. . . .

The American girl turned away and began to

gather together her possessions.

Presently, in mackintoshes and thick shoes, Steve and I went ashore. We found that in Alexandria it is very difficult to go for a walk. Taxi-men circled us with their taxi-cabs; they almost ran us down when we refused to ride.

In between the showers we wandered round the shops in the European quarter. Except for the men in their red hats and the little barefoot boys in their nightshirts, it might have been any French provincial town. It was all very modern and European and up to date, with smart women and fine buildings.

We found that a big square divided the native

quarter of the town from the European, and, as tourists, the native quarter was more what we were looking for. The streets were narrower and more colourful down there. There were hardly any white faces to be seen, except for the grinning posters of Douglas Fairbanks, Junior.

The women here were all dressed alike. They wore a flowing black robe made of crêpe, draped over their heads like widows' weeds. Across the lower part of their faces was a veil, kept in place by a section of brass curtain ring on their noses. Only

their eyes showed.

Most of them squinted a little. Try to wear a great brass tube on your nose and see if it wouldn't make you squint. Apart from that we thought they had very fine eyes, with long lashes darkened with kohl.

The nattier native men wore European dress, but they all wore their little red fezes, even indoors, even in church. Probably they slept in them. They are not very serviceable hats; they do not keep the sun off, and they would almost certainly blow away in a wind. Long ago they must have made up their minds they look kind of cute in them and that they would wear them always.

The shops in the native quarter were open on to the streets. Some of them had a kind of canopy over them made of old rags. The vegetables were heaped in bright-coloured piles on the pavement: tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflowers, all three times the size we are accustomed to seeing in England.

There were grain and herb stalls. The grain and

herbs were displayed in rush baskets. Sugar-cane

was sold by the yard.

A man trundled a barrow piled with round cakes which looked like partly deflated footballs. Another man sold oranges which he carried in a rush basket on his head.

It seemed to be the local custom to carry things around on your head. I saw a woman with a crate full of live hens, which must have been very difficult to balance, because all the hens were fighting.

We went down a little twisty street in which men and rams were sleeping full length on the pavement. Maybe rams were household pets around those

parts; no home complete without one.

At the end of the street was an open square. All round it were small mosques. As we passed, the men were coming out from prayer, putting their shoes on on the pavement. There was a great commotion round each doorway. Men who were not so religious were shouting their wares, spread out on tables at the door of each mosque.

The men who had come out of the mosque went into the coffee-houses, drank thick black coffee,

puffed away at their hubble-bubble pipes.

Later in the day, after dinner, four of us went to a native music-hall. I, and the Englishwoman with me, were the only two women in the whole of the crowded hall, except for the performers. We sat at a table drinking Turkish coffee, arrack liqueur, chewing sweet cakes made of honey and nuts. The performance was in Arabic, and interesting to us only because of its novelty. I was interested more in

the audience - men of all ages, all gay, all having fun.

Near to us there was a large table for a party of about ten. These were enjoying themselves gustily. Something about some of them seemed vaguely familiar. They were, I thought, not unlike the family party who had come on board that morning to greet the Egyptian boy and his American bride. And then one of them turned round and I saw that it was Aly. He was laughing. His fez had slipped to the back of his head.

Turning still further, he saw us. He stopped laughing, bowed stiffly, and turned back to his friends.

I didn't see the rest of the show. I was picturing the bewildered expression of the little American girl as she had looked out on to the rainy landing-stage that morning. I was imagining her surrounded by a crowd of shapeless Egyptian women, watching her curiously, talking about her in shrill staccato voices in a language which she couldn't understand. . . .

RECIPES

COCO-NUT CAKES

If you can pick a coco-nut off a tree or a fair ground, make it into coco-nut cakes. Open it up, put the milk aside, grind up the inside of the nut, and put it in a pan with ½ pound honey. Add the milk, stir, and boil. When the nice sticky mass thickens, spread it out on a flat well-buttered dish and cut it up into shapes that

you will like the look of when it gets cool enough to break up.

HONEY CAKE

And here's another kind of honey cake. You mix up to breakfastcupful of sugar with a breakfastcupful of thick sour cream. Sift in a breakfastcupfuls of flour (I hope your breakfast set carries a complete set of cups) and mix up everything very well. Add a tablespoonful boney, mix again, pop in to teaspoonful bicarbonate soda, and beat well for five minutes, or until your arm aches so much you have to stop. Lay it out in a greased tin and bake it from half to three-quarters of an hour.

ARRACK LIQUEUR

Remove the outer part of ½ lemon rind, slicing razor thin, add it to 1 pound of sugar-candy, 1 quart of water. Boil gently till a moderately thick syrup is formed. When cold, strain, and add it to a quart of arrack (which in itself is made by fermenting the juice of the coco and other palms). Bottle, cork securely, and store for use.

CHAPTER XIX

Moonlight on the Pyramids

A LL lovers who go to Cairo go out into the desert to see the moon shining on the

pyramids.

Half as a gag, half as a sentimental journey, Steve and I left Cairo, which we had not liked very much anyway, and moved out to the hotel at the foot of the pyramids. We had three or four days to spend there, and we kept the last evening of all on which to make our sentimental voyage.

Opposite the hotel there was a shop. The shop was kept by a sheik. He must have been a sheik;

it was printed on his visiting-card.

He was a very pleasant and gallant old sheik. Instead of coffee, with which it is customary to bribe shoppers in the East, he gave us ruby tea. This was the colour of rubies, as it well might be, and tasted of warmed-up grenadine. It is made from leaves grown on the ruby tea-tree.

I stayed in the sheik's shop a long time looking at his curios. Most of them seemed to be five thousand years old. Sheik Ibrahim knew all their history and produced great books to prove it.

I fell for the stories, and bought the eye of a statue of Horus to keep an eye on Steve (he bought me an old scarab). The sheik wrote out for us an

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impressive document which guaranteed that I could get my money back if the British Museum declared they were not genuine. But he didn't guarantee to pay the fare.

The curios would bring us luck, he said. Steve lost his, and mine broke into a million pieces when I took it to be set into a ring, so maybe we didn't

need the luck.

Sheik Ibrahim had a nephew, and the nephew

had a camel, named Brenda.

Brenda was one of the nicest camels I have ever met. In fact, he was the only one I have ever known with any degree of intimacy. Yes, you thought I was going to say "she," didn't you? But Brenda was a gentleman if ever I've met one.

Brenda was very temperamental because he once hit a motor-car. "He was running very fast," said Ahmed, "and he hit the motor-car—biff. Brenda hurt his shoulder very, very sick. But the motor-

car, she lay down."

So Brenda stopped whenever he saw a tuft of

green and ducked at it.

Ahmed himself was a pretty educated man. The next year he was going to be a dragoman, and this year he was practising up on his dialogue. He told us all the local gossip with a picturesque wealth of detail.

There had recently been, he said, "rich Englishman who is putting dogs in little boxes. Then he is getting a rabbit and making it run. Soon he opens up the little boxes and out fly the dogs. The dogs run very fast after the rabbit. Sometimes they are running so fast they are passing the rabbit. I am

not rightly understanding how it is arranged, but there are big money lotteries on this game."

Far out on the desert there was a collection of tents. We thought this was the headquarters of some nomad tribe. Ahmed said no, that was the Y.M.C.A.

Ahmed said it was too bad about the moon: perhaps there would be no moon to-night. A pity, he said, we couldn't arrange to come to-morrow evening, when he would personally see to it that there would be a very nice new moon.

He would, we told him, make a very good dragoman. He said he hoped so, because meanwhile he couldn't afford a wife. A dame sufficiently classy for such a high-class family would cost at least a

hundred pounds, with extras.

He led us out a long way over the desert until we came to another collection of tents. Brenda and Eustace, Steve's camel, stopped in front of these and knelt gently to the sand. It seemed that this was Ahmed's idea of a half-way house, and the camels were in on the secret.

"You and the gentleman getting down here," prompted Ahmed. "My cousin live here; he will cook you very good dinner. Afterwards, Allah

knows, perhaps there may be moon."

So we went inside the tent, muttering something about having been taken for a ride. There were tables and chairs inside, and the sand was spread with a fine Persian carpet.

"You can stay here the night, if you are wanting," said Ahmed. "Only three pounds a night; very

comfortable."

We said we were not wanting, but that as we were

here we might as well eat his dinner.

It was not long before dinner appeared. It was almost as if they had been expecting us. It was a very amusing dinner, and it was followed by coffee and arrack liqueurs, and presently we climbed back on to Brenda and Eustace and started out over the desert again.

It was almost dark by now. Over in the west the sky was still light, streaked with a last golden glow.

Suddenly Ahmed pointed. "Look," he said triumphantly. "It is the moon. One day before she should appear, Ahmed with the help of Allah has arranged her for you."

And, sure enough, just above the horizon, in the brighter western sky, was the thinnest, scimitar-edged slice of new moon I ever remember seeing. A few minutes it hovered there, and then it sank below the horizon.

Ahmed, we told him, would certainly make a very fine dragoman. He would be a good enough dragoman to buy himself three wives very, very soon.

"It is as Allah decrees," said Ahmed.

RECIPES

DRAGOMAN SOUT

I don't know whether Ahmed's cousin is still there, and, if he is, whether he would still serve you the same dinner or offer to put you up at three pounds a

night per head. But, anyway, this is the sort of soup

he gave us.

Half a pound of tomatoes and 1 of a pound of onions were cut up and lightly fried in fat and afterwards put in 1 quart of water. A pound of breast of mutton was cut up into small dice and put in with this, with some freshly chopped herbs (mint would do) and plenty of seasoning. It was brought to the boil and then cooked very slowly for three and a quarter hours. Meanwhile 2 ounces of thick vermicelli had been boiled and put into a deep dish. The soup was then poured over.

CHICKEN APPLES

The apples were large, and had had their tops sliced off and a hole dug in where the core had been. This was filled with chopped-up breast of chicken mixed with a little onion, clove, and chopped pistachio. Brown breadcrumbs were mixed up with a little melted butter and sugar and used to seal the top. The whole was baked.

CHAPTER XX

Cast your Bread Tel-Aviv

The way it's been talked about, that Palestine belongs to the Jews. In fact, almost every Fascist answer to the question: "Well, where do you suggest the Jews should go, then?" is "Let them go to Palestine." It is only when you get there that you realise that after all the Arabs have been living there for a good many hundred years. Certainly much longer than the Americans have been colonising America.

Still, the Jews have been pretty thorough about repatriating Palestine, and, as far as I can see, practically the only score chalked up on the Arabs'

side is the barbaric harbour at Jaffa.

Jaffa adjoins Tel-Aviv, and most of the people who arrive in Tel-Aviv by boat have to land in Jaffa harbour. The Jews have been very indignant about this for some time. They claimed that they, too, needed a port from which they might export their goods and to which they might import their fellow racemen (countrymen seems hardly the right word in the circumstances). To back up this claim, which was made to the British Government, who,

for no very adequate reason, have the say-so about the harbour, the Jews claimed that the harbour at Jaffa was about 1,000 years out of date; that sometimes ships waited a month to disembark cargo and then had to go away without doing so; that trade was badly handicapped by such a situation.

The British investigated this claim and found that it was justified. With that fair-minded impartiality which they like to think characterises all their dealings, they decided to favour neither side, but to build the harbour at Haifa, where it was no use to anyone (except, of course, the British).

And so, when our steamer anchored a mile outside of Jaffa (it is too rocky to get nearer), we climbed precariously into a bright orange row-boat, went through the farce of making one price with the boatman when he took us on board (in competition with other row-boats of various other hues: red, blue, green, yellow) and another, about double, before he would land us.

The harbour was filled with these row-boats, and, as there were at least ten or twelve steamers anchored out at sea, they were all very busy. Some of them had cargoes of oranges, some of passengers. All of them were operated by brown-faced men in white fancy dress. Their trousers, the like of which I never saw anywhere else, were made with a very complicated pleating in some way arranged between their legs. Their turban-like headdresses were cunningly fixed too.

Making the most of their harbour, the Arabs managed to charge us quite a lot one way and another before we finally got away. The Jewish agent of the people I was with (who had property in Tel-Aviv) complicated matters by carrying on a racial warfare right up until we got the last load on to the taxi.

He, the agent, had brought a Jewish taxi in from Tel-Aviv, and the driver helped him a lot with the warfare, though the quiet little man who sat next to the driver helped him neither in this nor in the stacking of our luggage. Evidently he had just come along for the ride.

It was bad enough, said the agent, to have us land at the Arab harbour, without having our lives endangered further by an Arab taxi-driver. And he spent the rest of the drive into Tel-Aviv telling us about the injustice of the harbour. It all seemed very nice and friendly in Palestine, we thought.

So we left the dirty, picturesque Jaffa and arrived in the new Florida-boom town of Tel-Aviv, with its new, modernistic villas, brightly stuccoed and chromiumed, and already – a sign of their mushroom growth – showing cracks in their plaster.

We arrived at the Hotel San Remo, which was right on the sea-front. The annexe, where we were to sleep, wasn't yet finished; there was no furniture in there even. But if we dumped our bags in the hall, said the manager, it would be by evening. And, sure enough, it was.

We stayed there for several days and enjoyed the sunshine, and ate a very great deal of excellently cooked food, and had a good time too.

Steve and I were the only goys in the whole of Tel-Aviv, but we had Jewish friends, so we were all right. We made a lot of mistakes, though. The

hotel dining-room was very kosher, and at first we were always asking for unkosher things to eat, like milk in our coffee and bread and butter with our meat course. Cups and plates which were in this way made unclean by us were smashed right and left. We must have been very expensive guests.

Although there was only one race in the hotel, there was a great mixture of nationalities. There were Germans who ate even more than we did, and were strict about religion and so kept their hats on There were Americans who were very fervent, either about Zionism or tourism; there were two or three English families, a couple of Poles and a few mid-Europeans.

There was one American couple who had come on the boat with us. We used to call them Haify and Jaify, because they'd argued so often, and with such strange pronunciation, at which of the two

ports they would land.

They had hired the car in which we had driven from Jaffa for the whole of their stay in Tel-Aviv, which was until the boat came back for them again. Sometimes, after lunch, we would sit out on the terrace of the hotel drinking coffee with them. They would never go down on the beach, because it was not tidal and it was not clean. Camels plodded along there several times daily, and there was a lot of orange-peel, too. Oranges in Tel-Aviv are about the size of footballs and cost a farthing each.

Haify and Jaify had suffered a good deal in Egypt. While we had strolled around Alexandria, they and other Americans had been hurtled up to

Cairo, shown bazaars, pyramids and museums at an almost impossible speed, and then, bruised and

battered, hurtled back on to the ship again.

But they were already beginning to gloss over and glorify what had, at the time, been an extremely painful experience. They were forgetting the smells, the heat, the lack of modern American sanitation, and composing in their minds eulogistic lectures with which they hoped to arouse envy in the bosoms of their fellow citizens who had been clever enough to stay right home on their own front porches. These desperate travellers, deeply resenting the fact that they had ever left their comfortable homes, had already made up their minds, perhaps subconsciously, to give a totally false impression of every-

thing that had happened.

"We haven't any too long in Palestine," Haify started in one day after lunch while Jaify was upstairs fetching the camera. "And we certainly don't want to miss anything. Crazy sort of fools we would look to the folks back home if we left out the Garden of Gethsemane or the Dead Sea or one of those dumps. Luckily Tel-Aviv is a good centre as well as being a decent, modern sort of a town with bathrooms, and we can tour from here. That way we can be reasonably sure of comfortable nights, and food that won't poison us, and still not miss anything. We asked the manager to get us a taxi-cab, and a guide to go with it. There they are at the gate, waiting for us. As you see, it's a good American make of car, so we are fairly sure not to break down. In some of these out-of-the-way places there are bandits, you know, though we try

to stick to the paved roads. But gosh, yesterday we got on a dirt road that was no better than a ploughed field with ditches across. A bandit could have

caught us walking backwards.

Our driver chap certainly can drive all right, and he's pretty smart, too. Knows his way around those tombs like he's been living in them all his life. But the other poor sap he has tagging along with him is about as much use as a sick headache. Doesn't know anything, not even the King's English. We'd just as well not have had him, only he seems to pair off with our driver.

"Thanks to that boy, we haven't missed a thing, I'm prepared to swear, not even the muddy little bit of Jordan where the Baptism took place. Though they do say the site for that has been changed five times in the last six years, according to whether it is the Coptics or the Greeks who are fixing to build a monastery on the place.

"And talking of monasteries" - Haify poured

himself out another cup of coffee and lit a fresh cigar - "have you been to Nazareth yet? Well, it's no use for you to go. There's not a sign of the carpenter's shop; just a lot of old monasteries. Not even a nunnery. I was never so disappointed in all my life."

At that moment Jaify came out, and, after pressing us to ride along with them to see one of the new Jewish collective farms, they rode off together. Haify's conversation made me feel breathless trying to find space to fit in some answers somewhere.

We were again drinking coffee with them on their last evening when Haify went off to speak to

the manager. Said he was going to consult the manager as to the size of tip he ought to give his taxi-driver. He'd been pretty good, said Haify, though the other chap on the box, the guide or whatever he called himself, didn't deserve a nickel.

He was gone some time. "Well, I'm no better off than I was," he told us when he got back. "It seems you could give that driver pretty well anything and it wouldn't surprise him. Not even if it was five thousand dollars."

"Well, you can't give him that," said his wife.

"It wouldn't surprise him, though," Haify told her. "About three years ago a very rich German stopped around these parts for about a month. A bad-tempered, cantankerous old gentleman; no pleasing him whatever they did for him. Wanted to see everything too, even the old Bible up at Nablus that the Samaritans own, and which is older than your Codex Sinaiticus.

"Well, he hired our taxi-driver friend, who seemed to treat him pretty good; took more trouble showing him round than he need have done, seeing he was a driver pure and simple in those days, though he's taken his guide's ticket

since.

"Before he left to get his boat back to Germany the old German hands him an envelope and tells him not to open it until his ship has sailed, but to

take good care of it just the same.

"The taxi-cab driver reckons it is a share tip, and, as he never plays the market, he puts it in a drawer and forgets all about it. But one day he comes across it at the back of the drawer, opens it

up, and finds it contains a cheque for five thousand dollars. Can you imagine that? Five thousand dollars! That's about a thousand pounds at par,

in your currency.

"He thinks this is pretty much of a joke the old man has played on him. He'd always seemed a stingy old beggar, without much money to spare. However, just out of curiosity, he takes it down to the bank next time he's going to town. To his surprise, they hand over the money right away and tell him that the cheque would have been just as good if it had had three or four more zeroes tacked on the end of it. The taxi-cab driver began to think that it certainly paid to treat grumpy old gentlemen well. You never can tell when they are going to turn out to be millionaires."

"That may be why he's been so attentive to us,

then," said his wife.

"I guess not," said Haify. "He just must be naturally kindhearted, because in the end it might not pay him so well as you'd imagine." He lit a cigar again and looked at us knowingly over the top of the smoke.

"It paid him five thousand dollars, anyway,"

said his wife.

"Ah, but you haven't heard the end of the story yet," said the American. "It seems the old fellow lost every penny he had when Hitler came into power – or at any rate he only just had enough to get him back to Palestine third class. That was the old chap sitting up on the front seat pretending to be the guide. The taxi-driver's keeping him now."

RECIPES

SOUR CREAM AS A SALAD DRESSING

The San Remo Hotel used a great deal of sour cream and sour milk in their cookery. Milk is almost the only food which is as good for you when it has gone sour as before. Some people say it is even better. There are nomad tribes in Rumania who practically live on it. And a lot healthier or longer lived than we are they are said to be.

Sour cream is a fine, easy salad-dressing over, say, shredded lettuce, scallion tops, sliced cucumber, radish, celery and grated raw carrots. You just pour it over the top and wait for the family to ask for a second helping.

FISH FILLETS WITH SOUR CREAM

Here's a way of using both sour milk and sour cream in the same dish. You put floured fish fillets into a buttered baking dish, dot with butter, season, nearly cover with sour milk, bake until the fish is flaky, the milk almost absorbed.

Five minutes before it is ready to serve, cover with sour cream, sprinkle with breadcrumbs, and put back in the oven until breadcrumbs are crisp.

CHAPTER XXI

The Bad Samaritan Nablus

Perowne, whom I have never met, we should probably never have gone to Nablus, which is in Samaria. That would have been a pity. Nablus is as old as Tel-Aviv is new, as Arab as Tel-Aviv is Jewish. Our friends in Tel-Aviv didn't really want us to see an Arab town; said we wouldn't be interested. It would be dirty, they said, and old, and the Arabs were not a nice people. We thought it would be nice to find out for ourselves just the same.

Stuart Perowne had been at Cambridge with Steve, and they had talked several times on the telephone since we had been in Palestine. Stuart Perowne invited us to stay with him in Nablus, where he was stationed on some sort of Government service. We went, but when we got there he had been called away.

So we went to a hotel. It was an Arab hotel, run by an Arab family. There was an old, white-bearded patriarch of an owner. One of his young sons, a good-looking young man named Abdul, was about as dark as a sunburnt Spaniard, with flashing white teeth and a sense of humour. He adopted us. The ground floor of the hotel was all one large room, which was used for a reception hall, diningroom, lounge. In one corner there was a gramophone with a battered blue horn. There were a number of Arab records, which all seemed to play the same excited, wailing music. I found them amusing, but as soon as I put one on the gramophone Abdul bowed deferentially, excused himself, removed the Arab tune, and put on a scratched American version of "Thanks for the Buggy Ride," smiling at the pleasure he was giving us.

The hotel was an amusing, Heath Robinson sort of an outfit. It was all falling to pieces and tied together with string. They were building a new and very grand hotel down the road. They had been building it for years and so it had never seemed worth while to do anything much about the one

which was already standing: just.

We went to bed soon after our arrival. Next day Abdul was all ready to take us sight-seeing. First he took us to a soap factory. There were twenty-five soap factories in town, he told us, but of course the one he would show us would be the biggest and the best.

It was a friendly place. Horses stood in one corner and tattered hens picked a living among the soap-flakes. They made soap by mixing olive oil and soda together and cooking them in a great pan for eight days.

They gave me a piece of the best toilet soap to take away with me. It was round, like a cricket-ball, and quite as hard. It was decorated with a

red heart and a blue crescent which went all the way through, like the writing in Blackpool rock. They said it was especially good soap because it had been kept so long. Not a cake is sold till it's

ten years old.

Then our young man took us round the town. It was an old town all right. A lot of it had been knocked down by an earthquake, but even the rebuilt part now looked equally old. The town was once named Shechem. Abraham encamped there. Rome captured it in A.D. 67, killed off 11,000 inhabitants, renamed it Flavia Neapolis, and that name, in an abbreviated form, has been retained to this day.

Abdul thought we ought to see the Samaritans, too. Of course, strictly speaking, all the inhabitants of Nablus were Samaritans, as they lived in Samaria, but these Samaritans were different. They are a religious sect who have intermarried for several thousand years and still look pretty good on it. There are about 206 of them now, last count.

They have a bit of an old Bible, the Samaritan Codex of the Pentateuch. Museums are always offering money for it, but so far they have held out. You can pay them a sum of money and see this codex; at least, you think you are seeing it, which amounts to the same thing. Very impressively the white-bearded high-priest folds aside layers of green Venetian fabric, takes a roll out of a cylinder, unfolds a little of it for you to see. It is (of course) hand-written on old vellum, said to be made from the skins of sacrificed sheep. It is said that they have a second best codex for showing to travellers.

So that would be the one we saw and never knew the difference.

We had quite a religious morning, because after that we went into the big mosque. We took off our shoes and left them at the entrance. They were

still there when we got back, too.

With Abdul we slithered through miles of alleyways with open stalls on either side. Children followed us down the alleys, their wooden shoes sounding pick-pock on the cobbles. Sometimes they threw stones at us, but all in quite a friendly spirit.

We had lunch in the hotel. We had lamb cooked with honey and nuts, which was very good. Afterwards Abdul took us to a pastry shop for our pudding. That's the way they do things there. We ate a lot of very sweet cakes and they were fine.

We said we wanted to buy a film, and Abdul

took us to see his friend, Dia Abdo.

Dia Abdo was a tailor as well as a photographer. He had a shop ten by eight, and there were at least sixteen people tailoring in it. In one corner was his dark-room, a small box two by four. He was the head tailor. He photographed all the youth and beauty of the neighbourhood. It was even rumoured that he had snapped the local bandit, a pleasant fellow who had killed seven men and was skilled in the art of highway robbery. But, though the English police searched the tailor's shop from end to end, they never found the photograph.

He also stocked three films, none of them the size for my camera. He showed great ingenuity in cutting one down, exposing it to the light with blissful unconcern. It came out all right, though.

Then he began to talk to Abdul. From the way they pointed at me I was afraid the conversation

was getting personal.

"He want to know," Abdul said at last, "whether you are Princess Mary? He hear she is in Palestine, and, as he is correspondent for our newspaper, he wants to write to them about it."

I apologised, and said that I was only another newspaper man like himself, but he seemed to think

that was just as good.

"But what makes him think I am Princess Mary?" I asked Abdul. "Hasn't he ever seen her photograph?"

"Oh, yes, he's seen photographs of her," said Abdul. "But he couldn't tell from that. After

all, every white woman, they look alike."

Dia Abdo and I parted with mutual congratulations, and he offered to send me a picture of the bandit one day if I would promise not to show it

to the English police.

He did it, too, but not until the bandit had been captured. The photograph showed a figure wearing a flowing white robe with a white cloth over his face and slits in it for his eyes. Some had said that he had ridden a big black horse with a flowing tail and mane. There was no sign of the horse in the picture.

Dia Abdo's letter told all about the capture.

"DEAR MISS LADY," he began, - "To-day great forces of Nablus police with other great forces from Tulkarem and Jenin and other police

stations set out to make capture of Aboo Gildeh – who is discovered to be the bandit – and surrounding the den in which he and his fellow has been living. After they arrive for some time Aboo Gildeh felt that there is something outside, then fired two shots.

"The police retired, but then sent a man to the cave called Saleem (Aboo Gildeh's fellow's cousin). This man told to Aboo Gildeh and his fellow there is a great force outside, and it is impossible to escape or defend, and it is better you yield.

"Then Aboo Gildeh and his fellow are imprison at Nablus, and I hasten to write you for

putting in the English newspaper.

"Your sincere Nablus friend,
"DIA ARDO."

RECIPE

SACRIFICIAL LAMB

Some time after the incident of the bandit I had another letter from Dia Abdo telling me about the Passover of the Samaritans. It seems they come out on to a hill-top called Mount Gerizim. They spend seven days on the hill making burnt offerings, and then, as near as I can tell from the letter, eating some of the burnt offerings on the seventh day, with the High Commissioner for Palestine and other heads of the Government of Palestine, and lesser visitors, looking enviously on.

The Samaritans kill seven sheep, one for each day of

the week, and also, so they say, because Moses was seven months old when he saw the light.

The year-old sheep are killed, their wool is pulled out and the viscera extracted, and the inside of each animal washed. Then it is filled up with fat, salt and pepper, skewered together, and slowly turned on a revolving spit over an open fire of glowing embers. It is brushed with hot fat from time to time and cooked to a rich brown. Only the Samaritans are allowed to eat it.

The meat we had was cooked similarly, but indoors, and the meat was afterwards cut into joints and stuffed with an amber-flavoured honey with which several kinds of chopped nuts were mixed. The outside of the meat was also brushed with the honey.

CHAPTER XXII

Ierusalem

E bumped over the Wilderness in a car. We had been to Jericho.

Three days before, on our first day in Jerusalem, we had been adopted by George. When we first saw him we were climbing down the narrow, cobbled steps which form the main shopping-street of the old Jerusalem. Someone came up behind us muttering incantations. At least, that was what it sounded like at first.

After a while we gathered that this someone wished to show us over certain points of local interest, for which he proposed to charge four shillings.

We turned round to get a better look at the man behind the offer and saw George. He wore an overcoat and a red fez, and his face was an honest,

shiny brown.

"I show you Wailing Wall," he beamed. He had a Charlie Chaplin moustache and the same sort of disarming smile. He added, as a bribe, "I am

Christian guide."

So we saw the Wailing Wall. It was a great wall, thirty or forty feet high. At the foot of it rows of men, with flat black hats and long curls, beat their hands against the stone.

"The Jewish peoples they cry because they wanting to go inside walls for building temple," explained George helpfully.

Then he took us to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Inside there were a lot of men shouting

and trying to sell things.

"You not buying anything, not give anyone any money. I know what necessary pay," George instructed us. He had taken off his hat, but most of the other guides had kept theirs on.

He pushed aside a priest who was praying and pointed out a statue of a woman behind a glass frame. The woman was hanging, festooned with jewels, real jewels sparkling in the light of the candles.

"This is Virgin Mary. All real diamonds, worth two million pounds. No other Virgin in the world

has so many jewels," said George.

More people tried to sell us things. They hissed and muttered when we wouldn't buy. "No use; they are English, not American," George told them.

It was the next day that George decided we should see Jericho. Bethlehem, too, we shouldn't miss, and it was all on the way. He had a friend with a car.

He sat in front with the friend, and Steve and I sat in the back, and every few minutes George would turn round and point out a view or urge us to have a cigarette, an orange, or a sweet which he produced from little packages in his pocket. George was a very generous man.

Outside the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem

Outside the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem there was great activity. Shopkeepers clamoured round our car before it had stopped. They fought each other for us. They had a good selling line: "If you come into my shop I show you something more wonderful you never saw in all your lives," said one.

But George had his own particular boy friend, and we were taken into his shop and told just which pieces of mother-of-pearl carving we should buy. And after that we made for the Wilderness. It

And after that we made for the Wilderness. It was a wilderness indeed. There was nothing on the bare, brown hills: no trees, no green, no birds, no bees, no locusts, and, as far as we could tell, no

honey.

Presently the car jerked to a standstill. Below us and to the right there was a sparkle of blue water backed by more than two hundred miles of mountain range. We could see miles of barren desert, land which could be highly fertile if only it could be irrigated. One corner of it, on our left, was cultivated. There were trees and gardens and small, flat houses.

"That, lady, is the New Jericho," said George. Presently we drove into the main square of the New Jericho. In the middle was a wide expanse of hard mud. Surrounding it were huts, open on the side facing the square. There were baskets full of grain and oranges for sale in some of the huts, but the shopkeepers sat around lazily drinking coffee and smoking, dressed in white. I took a photograph of one. "Shilling, shilling," he demanded; but he was too lazy to follow the matter any further.

George wanted to buy some oranges. I said I had more oranges than I needed in the car, and

offered to give him some.

"No, no," he protested. "Jericho oranges are

special."

When he had bought some he gave one to me. I ate it. It was a very nice orange, but, then, so are all Palestine oranges.

"What is there special about it?" I asked.

"Well, you see, there are some ill people who are believing that these oranges are curing them. I take them back to sick man in Jerusalem, who pay big price for them."

"Are they really any good?"

"We-ell." He shrugged. "I Christian guide; I not believe. But some people are saying they are

being cured by them."

Maybe there was something in the soil that made the oranges different. Maybe it's only faith. But the very next time I felt ill I ate a Jericho orange. I

felt better right away.

I don't know quite how it was we managed to persuade George to allow us to remain by the Dead Sea for the night (there were huts to be rented along the beach, and a sort of a restaurant). I think he was amused that we wanted to see the sun set over the Trans-Jordanian mountains, claiming that we wouldn't believe it even if we saw it with our own eyes. And it did turn out that at sunset the mountains and valleys at the back of the Dead Sea were lit with such unbelievable, unearthly purples, crimsons, and fuchsia tones that no realistic artist would have dared to paint them.

Before George fetched us next morning we had had time to bathe - if sitting on water in which it is impossible to swim because you can't

get your legs under water can be called bathing. Just before lunch we parted with George. It was quite a sad parting, and took place on the roof of his house. His house was in the middle of the old part of the town. The streets there have a quaintness bordering on affectation: if it were not for the quite realistic smells, their effect would seem too studied to be natural. But we had to climb a great number of steps to get to George's house, and by the time we reached it we were above smells. From the roof there was a wonderful view over all the city, and his wife, a very nice lady ("also a Christian," boasted George), brought us coffee in cups the size of thimbles. There were plenty of grounds for divorce in that coffee.

We walked back into the new part of the town, which, in contrast, seemed very, very new and redbrick. We tried to shop, but shopping in Palestine

is complicated by the fact that there are three Sundays a week: Arab, Jewish, Christian. "The Palestine week," said an old inhabitant, "consists of three Sundays and four to-morrows."

There was a shop which I rather fancied, called the Smart Little Queen, and an up-to-date milliner named Japhet. What I particularly liked, though, was the hairdresser who advertised "Dyeing and Discolouring," which seemed so candid somehow.

We had planned to lunch at the King David Hotel. This is a five-star hotel, a hotel de luxe such as you might find in Honolulu or in Luxor, in Florida or in Florence. It seemed strangely out of place in Jerusalem, but we were told it did a good trade.

We ordered lunch, and then sat down in the lounge to drink a cocktail. At the next table was an old man whom I knew quite well: Henry Wallace, who for years had been my furrier. Evidently he was on holiday. The fur trade must be more flourishing than I thought.

I waved to him, and he beamed, and came over to our table. We asked him to sit down, and he bought us a drink. "To celebrate," he explained.

"So you are on holiday?" I asked.

He beamed again. "No. I am retired. I am going to buy a house and settle for my old age in peace. I have done enough in business."

He tugged at his bushy moustache and settled his comfortable, chain-spangled stomach more closely

in his comfortable chair.

"Yes," he went on, "I have done enough in business. Sixty years."

"You must have started in the cradle, then," I

said.

- "I started when I was ten years old. My father heard what fine treatment Jews received in England. No ghettos, no pogroms, no business restrictions. So he brought us all to England. I have never left it since. But I have never felt very much at home in England; I have never felt very English, in spite of my English wife and my English children, and the fine new English name my father found for me."
 - "You did well in England," I reminded him.
- "Yes, I did well. I had a purpose in doing well; it was always to save enough money to leave England, to go back to my home. I saved. I had

planned to retire at forty, while I was still a young man, and take my wife and children away with me. But my English children, they did not want to go. So I decided to wait till I was fifty and they were grown up. But then the war came and my English sons were killed, and the fur trade was not so good. I thought I would surely go at sixty, but my English daughter married a man who gambled and got into debt, and borrowed a big sum of money from his firm. I had to replace that; I could not let my daughter's husband go to prison. But now my wife is dead, and my sons are dead, and my daughter is dead, and I have no more claims in England. And I will live the remaining years of my life in the land of my grandfathers."

"Poland, Mr. Wallace?" But is Palestine on the

way ? "

"Ah, no, not Poland. Thirty years, twenty, ten years ago I would have gone to Poland, the land of my fathers. Here in Palestine is the land of my grandfathers, the land in which I really belong. Here is where I shall stay. Here at last I feel at home."

"I am so glad, Mr. Wallace, and I hope you will

be very happy here," I said.

"Yes, I shall be very happy. But you must no longer call me Mr. Wallace. Look." And he led me across to the reception desk and showed me the name which had last been entered in the visitors' book.

"Say it," he said triumphantly.

"Herman Walkowyczi," I spelled out cautiously. "That," he said proudly, "is what you must call me. Now I have not only a country of my own, but my own name. Herman Walkowyczi, that is a name to boast about!"

" Just so long as you can pronounce it," I laughed

and we all went in to lunch.

I sent for some menus from the King David Hotel, Jerusalem. These were very elaborate: I remembered that the food had been excellent.

Here, for instance, is a specimen luncheon which, they told me, had been cooked from recipes given

in Escoffier's cook-book.

LUNCH

Choix de Hors d'Œuvres ou Grape Fruit

Œufs brouillés aux Champignons

Entrecôte Château grillée Bercy Pommes frites Chou-fleur Polonaise

> Buffet Froid à la Gelée Salade du pays

Tartelettes aux Fruits

Plateau de Fromages

Corbeille de Pomone

Somehow it doesn't seem right to give you a recipe for entrecôte château grillée Bercy out of a

French cook-book, and say it was representative of Jerusalem. An Arab dish, perhaps, or even an English; certainly a Jewish. But a French one, no. So I give you amnastich, which is really a Passover dish.

RECIPE

AMNASTICH

A chicken is stuffed with veal forcemeat and trussed for boiling. One pound Carolina rice is bathed and dried, put in a stewpan with 1 quart of white stock, brought to boiling-point. Added are 1 Spanish onion pin-cushioned with 4 cloves, a bouquet of parsley, thyme and bay leaf, salt and pepper.

This is cooked slowly until the rice begins to soften, when it will be fit company for the chicken. Cover the chicken with an eiderdown of rice and cook slowly till done. Remove the chicken and the frilly bits from the pan, add the juice of a well-developed lemon and the beaten yolks of 4 eggs. Stir for a few minutes on the fire. Put the chicken on a dish and pile the eggy-rice around it.

CHAPTER XXIII

Garden of Eden: Galilee

From the first it seemed an impertinence to ring the bell for a maid and get a nun.
But that might be just a way they had in Eden, and for the first few days we were there that was exactly what the hospice of the Sea of Galilee seemed like.

Steve and I had come away from the rest of the party at Tel-Aviv, where Purim festivities were getting excitable, to try to find some peace and some sunshine.

We found both at the hospice. There were other people staying there, of course. But they were tourists – or perhaps they called themselves pilgrims – who set out every fine morning to visit local shrines, their luncheons and guide-books in neat knapsacks. Each morning the benevolent, blue-eyed head father, with his ruddy face, white hair and twinkle, departed to take a class of Arabs (he preferred his Arabs to his Europeans, but the Europeans paid). The two bearded under-fathers engaged themselves in digging the garden and practising the harmonium respectively. The quiet, sour-faced nuns moved silently about the house, managing to complete their menial jobs without putting a crinkle into their stiff, white starchery.

And Steve and I had the rest of the place to ourselves.

Then we would get our books and our bathingsuits, and a bag of oranges and biscuits, and walk a quarter of a mile along the edge of the lake on a path cut in the face of the rock, to the eucalyptusgrove.

In this grove there was a pool which, at one end, trickled into a small stream, and so into the big lake.

Besides the silver-grey eucalyptus-trees the pool was also fringed with jagged-leaved banana plants, small-tree size, each with one or two sinister flowers like large red insects. As we arrived, small lizards, which had been sunning on the flat rocks, scurried and plopped into the water. They could only be lured to the surface again by pieces of orange-peel, which seemed to be their favourite food. They would dart and nibble at the orange-peel all around the pool until it was finished. All day long bright blue kingfishers flashed across the pool, poised on leaves, skimmed the water looking for fish.

We bathed, and lay in the sun, and read our books, and talked, and ate oranges so that there

would be peel for the lizards.

Nobody ever came down to the pool except sometimes ragged Arab children with blue eyes, who would try to sell us necklaces made of shell. Otherwise we were undisturbed. For three days we had this Garden of Eden all to ourselves. And then came the sandstorm.

The quiet chirrup of grasshoppers, who sounded a note like a small, clear, silver bell, was shut off by the howl of an eighty-mile gale. The distant sound of drums beating on the lake, which at first we had thought was the lure of the East, the ceaseless beat of the tom-toms, but had turned out to be only fishermen banging empty petrol-cans to attract fish, stopped. Instead, there was a great beating of waves against the rocks on the shore, the crackle of the rain lashing the windows of the hospice. The Sea of Galilee cuts up rough quicker than any other sea, so I have been told.

For a couple of days Steve and I had to stop

indoors. So did the pilgrims.

We tried to stay in our rooms as much as we could. But the nuns used to come and crackle their starched headpieces and look reproachfully at us, and tut at ashes on a bedroom floor.

We had to come down.

In Palestine there is a religious settlement representing almost every religion, and most denominations and sects to be found within those religions. It is probably the only country in which you could find just such a hospice. Palestine is by no means exclusive to the Jews, even since Hitler. This was, in fact, a settlement of perfectly Aryan German Catholics. The boarders, though, were mostly English.

A cross-section of them would show six women to every man, and that man an anæmic curate, hollow-voiced and -chested, though inclined to skittishness. Five of the women would be spinsters, dried up, the plain daughters of country doctors, lawyers, clergymen; the sixth, a widow, more mellowed, but, from our point of view, more tiresome. It was the widows that asked the questions. The

whole collection were religious pilgrims who knew their Baedekers by heart and referred to places of interest by their biblical names.

We sat at meals at long refectory tables. At each table a father presided. The nuns waited at table. The table-napkins were clean and damp, and the food ascetic. No one ever asked a nun for a second helping. It would have seemed like robbing the poor box.

There was a lot of competition to sit next to the head father, the idea being that you could then ask him for yourself whether Christ had actually walked on the water or was it just a legend? We didn't get promoted to sit next to him until the very last day. We did not, of course, ask him this leading question, which was certainly a relief for him but confirmed his previous knowledge that we were not quite respectable.

Besides the widow who asked the most questions there was also a widow, more intense, who burned incense: her room was next to mine. Then there was a small, yellow, nervous spinster who sat around writing interminable letters in a neat, pointed, staccato writing. She propped her writing-block with its grey-lined thin white paper on her knee and wrote very quickly with an old-fashioned

stylo pen.

The talkative widow told me that she, the grey spinster, wrote four or five letters every day: a daily letter to her sister, with whom she was not, at close quarters, on very good terms. She wrote, too, to various nieces, the clergyman of her home town, to the worshipful brother of a women's masonic

order, to other lonely women she had met on her travels and long since forgotten in everything but name.

I asked the widow how she knew all this, and she told me she had met her, years before, in Florence, exchanged half a dozen sentences with her there. The last of these was a promise from the spinster to send a postcard from Rome, in exchange for one from Venice. A weekly postcard habit had gradually developed into a weekly, a bi-weekly, and then a daily letter. The widow, no letter-writer herself, had replied occasionally with changes of address. She liked receiving letters, though she confessed she did not always manage to read through the long pages of descriptive matter before the next letter arrived.

I suggested that the spinster must have been very happy to meet her friend again. But indeed, said the widow, the poor woman had found the meeting most embarrassing, and would have avoided it if she had known of it beforehand. Her gift of friendship went no further than her pen.

For two days we stayed in while the wind blew a sand rain from across a thousand miles of desert, the sea raged, and the atmosphere inside the hospice

simmered and boiled over.

The third day we tied up our hair in scarves, turned up the collars of our raincoats, gritted our teeth – there was plenty of grit, sure enough – and started out to walk through the sandstorm to Tiberias.

We met a donkey on the road, and he had a sore place on his neck with sand in it. He was crying bitterly; great tears were rolling down his cheeks and plopping on to the ground. He was a sad little donkey, but we had to leave him and go on.

And eventually we arrived at Tiberias, which was not much of a town in itself but had a hotel which was expecting to entertain Princess Mary. She didn't arrive that day, and maybe she never did arrive, but we ate the lunch that was prepared for her, and very good it was.

But the next day we went back to Tel-Aviv. No serpent could have turned us out of Eden more effectively than that sandstorm.

Cornwall

NE of the war scares was on when I went down to Cornwall for the week-end. "Uz doan't want no war," said the halfpint in the corner. "Uz had enough of 'un laast toime, wi' three or four and twenty young chaps took from here."

"And rents risin' from a shillin' a week to eight

and ten shillin'," said the tankard of cider.

"If uz got up there uz'd soon stop 'un," the mild ale declared.

"How would you do that?" I asked.

"Make 'un fight it out wi' fisticuffs, or bladders on sticks."

"That would be a fine solution," I said. "But,

as things are, who would you rather fight?"

"Doan' make no difference if you're killed by a Froggy or a Hun, I rackon," put in the half-pint.

"French women wuz all right; they wuz foine," reminisced the cider. "They wuz as good as English women." And he looked sentimentally towards me.

"Garge there got 'it on the 'ead." The mild ale touched his forehead significantly. "They took 'ee away, but 'ee's all right now, 'cept for the fits, and we're used to them."

And they went on to talk about the weather, and how the rain was washing the seeds out of the ground, and how there had never been so much rain "in livin' memory."

The fact is, they are more interested in the weather in Cornwall than they are in the European situation.

It affects them more immediately.

"Four years out of the pot, and look at it now," says your Cornishman, pointing to a large gumtree about the size of the oak-tree that hid Bonnie Prince Charlie. Furthermore, he will be perfectly willing to dig it up then and there and put it right back in the pot so that you can take it away with you.

He's like that, the Cornishman. Proud of his sub-tropical vegetation, anxious to share it with "foreigners." Myself, I came away with what would in any normal part of the country have been an entire rhododendron bush. In Cornwall, where they grow into trees over fifty feet tall, it was just one of the more insignificant lower branches. As for red camellias, the great branches with which I tickled the noses of all my fellow travellers would have kept a London florist prosperous for a week.

Most of these came from the garden of Tregrehan House. (You miss out two-thirds of the syllables when you pronounce it: Tr'grain). This was once the home of the Mount-Edgcumbes, but it changed hands in Queen Elizabeth's day, when it was bought by a man named Carlyon, a tin-miner, considered by the county of those days quite a nonveau riche sort of fellow. It stands a little way back from what is now Carlyon Bay. The house is an odd but

and Georgian architecture, and the garden is an even more unusual mixture. It is a tree garden. Besides the trees of rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias, mimosa, all in flower at this time of the year, there is a collection of conifers from all parts of the world: bearded Mexicans, sleek Brazilians, knotty-looking Australians, bluff Canadians, formal, decorative Chinese and Japanese. There's one called Abies Mexican Grandies which may even be a relation of Abie's Irish Rose. Frolicking around among the roots of these are daffodils, primroses, jonquils. Later there will be bluebells.

There's a walled garden at Tregrehan, too, with lemons and bougainvillæa growing in it, and a turtle in a pool under a dolphin fountain who has been living a bachelor, or it may even be a spinster,

existence there for forty years.

Near Tregrehan there's an old chapel called Leek Seed Chapel. There's a legend about this. It seems that about a hundred years ago, or it may be two hundred for all I know, there was an old gardener at Tregrehan who was also a pillar of the chapel. Young Carlyon, with two other local bloods, young Rashleigh and young Tremayne, decided to play a practical joke on the old man. They held him up with pistols, demanded the chapel funds. The old man picked up a candle, set it down in a heap of black powder, told them that if they moved a muscle he would blow them to pieces. He took all their valuables, added them to the chapel funds, made them kneel on the floor while he prayed for their souls.

He kept them there for two hours, kneeling on

the cold stone floor (which young Rashleigh afterwards declared was a greater punishment than the loss of their valuables).

Then he dismissed them, and went on with the job at which he had been disturbed, thinking how lucky it was for him that he had been counting leek seed, which looks so like gunpowder, when it

might easily have been onion bulbs. . . .

Evidently the Cornishmen of those days were what was known as young blades. There's a rather odd-looking urn in the neighbourhood, put up by Charles Rashleigh to his friend George Mount-Edgcumbe, "a Nobleman whose benevolence of temper and peculiar vein of humour rendered him a delight to all his acquaintance."

Aside from the fishing and the tourists, there are three other local trades: the china clay industry, the Cornish cream, and the sub-tropical flowers.

St. Austell is the china clay centre. All over the countryside there are deep holes from which the clay – decomposed granite – has been dug, and white mountains of the residue of the diggings.

These mountains and holes may one day form an entirely new Cornish lake district. Already on some of the mounds gorse, grass and bramble are growing, and the holes, as they become disused, are forming into lakes.

As for the clay itself, it is used to make a lot of things, including the gloss on art paper. Practically the only two things it doesn't go to making are

china and Cornish cream.

I've always wanted to know just how Cornish cream was made, so I went to visit a farm to find out.

Mrs. Nancarrow, who lived on the farm and made the cream, had apple cheeks, a way with butter, the cleanest little dairy, the neatest grey stone cottage I ever remember seeing. She also has a son who has gone out to California to work on the street cars there.

Mrs. Nancarrow makes her cream and butter "just like my granny did. Nothin' new-fangled." She made a pound of butter for us in just about ten minutes.

She has a cheerful husband who gets up at five every morning to milk his eight cows, but has

plenty of time to consider world politics.

"It seems," he said, talking about the League of Nations, "that the strong nations get it all their own way. Back along when the Japanese started that trouble, nothing seemed to be done to stop it – or, at least, nothing effective – and when they got away with it Italy followed suit. These nations seem to make agreements, but when they don't like something they just snap their fingers and walk out."

Outside the Nancarrows' farm there is a gypsy encampment. One time the gypsy got ill and the doctor came and told him he must go to hospital. "Have you any money you can contribute towards hospital expenses?" asked the doctor. "I expect they'll take my cheque," replied the gypsy.

It's a fine and saintly bit of coast-line that was once ruled over by King Mark of Cornwall, Tristram's uncle. St. Mewan, St. Austell, St. Blazey, St. Ewe and St. Samson all have their villages within

a few miles of each other.

Most of them are named after their pet saint, but

St. Mewan (he slew a dragon) guards a village named Mevagissey, which is as old and twisty as any fishing-village along the coast, not even excepting Fowey (you call it Foy). The guide-book has the last word on Mevagissey, though. After describing at some length its quaint old Georgian harbour, its two-decker houses, one floor on one street, the floor above on another, it ends up abruptly: "It always smells of fish." And whenever I've been there it always has.

RECIPES

MRS. NANCARROW'S CORNISH CREAM

Her morning milk goes out just as it is, in bottles. None of the ream is taken off. The stuff we call cream in London is just ream to the Cornish, and raw ream at that.

The evening milk is strained into enamel pans, left overnight, and in the morning put on a very low heat. It has to come slowly almost to boiling-point, but if it boils it spoils. Then it is cooled off in a trough with water flowing past the pans.

Next day it is skimmed, and there's your Cornish cream.

Her butter's made from this cream too. Mrs. Nancarrow puts the cream in the basin, churns it around with her hands. It stiffens almost at once, and a few minutes later buttermilk comes out. That has to be all got out or the butter wouldn't keep. It takes about another two or three minutes, and then it is washed and patted and salted, and there's your butter. There is a Cornish welcome which reads:

"You can 'ave what you like to ate, my dears, you'm very welcome to what we've got. There es mar'nated pelchards, Cornish pasty, hog's pudden, tatie cake, figgy 'obben, saffern cake, bread and crame, and a nice dish o' tay weth et."

CORNISH PASTY

The Devil once said that he would never go to Cornwall for fear they put him inside a Cornish pasty. They put everything else, he said, inside. It's true you can put in all sorts and kinds of tasty scraps, but if you are starting from scratch, here is the way. This makes four.

You take 2 pounds flour, \$ pound lard, \$ teaspoonful baking-powder, and mix them all together, adding water to make a thick paste. Add a saltspoonful of salt and then roll out the mixture until it is an eighth of an inch thick. Put on to four large cheese-plates and cut round. Cut 8 potatoes, well washed and peeled, into thin slices, and 1 pound of beefsteak (or the equivalent in scraps) into small squares, and flavour with pepper and salt. Onion can be added, and turnip used instead of potato. Fold the pasty over the top of the meat. The Cornish have a knack of crimping the edges together which is very hard to learn. But, anyway, see that it is all joined up into a solid crescent with a crimped edge before you bake in a moderate oven for three-quarters of an hour. It can then be eaten hot or cold.

POTATO CAKES

Or tatic cakes, if you prefer it. This is enough for four.

Mash up 1½ pounds of potatoes fine and use them dry.

Mix them up with ¾ pound of lard crisps (some butchers

call these scollops), 3 pounds flour, 3 teaspoonfuls baking-powder, a pinch salt and enough milk to make a thick paste. Roll the pastry to an inch thick. Cover a plate with it and trim the edges. Cut into four pieces and bake in a hot oven for three-quarters of an hour until the mixture has turned a golden brown. Serve hot with plenty of butter.

SAFFRON CAKES

Place I ounce of yeast in a basin with I teaspoonful of sugar and 1 cupful water and allow to rise. Dry in the oven I dram of saffron and then roll into a powder and place in a basin with boiling water, so as to steam it.

Mix together 2 pounds flour, \(\frac{1}{2}\) pound lard, \(\frac{1}{2}\) pound butter, \(\frac{1}{2}\) pound granulated sugar, \(\frac{1}{2}\) pound currants, \(\frac{1}{2}\) pound sultanas, \(\frac{1}{2}\) teaspoonful salt, one piece finely cut peel. Moisten with the yeast and saffron, adding warm water or milk if necessary. Cover with a clean cloth and put into a warm place to rise. When it is risen, cut it up into small pieces the size of a rock cake, put in a hot oven, and bake for half an hour.

CHAPTER XXV

Caviar

The boat which took me to New York was not one of the newest and most expensive boats. Nor was it one of the slow, comfortable, cheap, one-class ships. It was a middle-class boat, with all the pretensions and disadvantages of the middle class.

I was tired when I went on board, and I was running a temperature from a mild attack of influenza. It wasn't that I felt very ill; it was just that I did feel unsociable. Even in the short time I had spent getting my passport fixed, standing uncomfortably in a queue, though presumably there was the whole journey in which to attend to the matter, I had time to realise just how unsociable I felt. There was a tall young American in one of those high-necked jumpers they call sweat-shirts; he hovered around me looking as if he intended to be helpful. So I escaped as soon as I could to my cabin and got into bed.

The couple who had travelled on the boat-train with me sent in a message to ask if I would play bridge with them. Once I was an addict of the game, but a lot of bridge will go over the water before I ever play bridge again – if I can get away

with saying I don't know how.

I stayed in bed for three days, and at the end of that time I was in a better temper, so I got up for dinner.

I asked for my table, and it was a table for two, and the other inhabitant was the tall young American. He had, he told me, decided to give me that one more chance: if I hadn't shown up for dinner he was going to have had his place moved. He was a nice young man, but there were times, later in the voyage, when I realised that I should have stuck to my cabin for just one more meal.

The best thing about the dinner, which otherwise was good, solid and not too imaginative, in spite of the apparent variety which appeared on the programme, was the caviar. There had been excellent caviar every night, and lots of it, my American informed me. It seemed that there was a

caviar king on board.

"Maybe he's paying off his passage with caviar," I suggested. But the young American, who was ponderously minded for an American, said that, as the caviar king had his wife and child on board, it was unlikely that we could eat as much caviar as all that, but that probably the boat got a cut rate on the caviar. So perhaps it was only the child that was riding free, I said.

Some time later I got to know the caviar king. He was not a young man; certainly well over sixty. He had a bald-looking face and head, his skin was a soft putty colour, and he wore a heavy gold watch-chain over a sudden stomach. His clothes were very neat and careful. He was a German who had spent a lot of time in America, and he had a

wife who was a good deal younger than he was, though still not young. She was German, too, and didn't speak English. Their child, a boy, was about six years old, and so white and spindle-legged that I thought they would have trouble to rear him. Caviar diet may not be good for children.

The old man liked to dance, and, though it was a bad time of year for dancing on the Atlantic, we used to slide together down steep hills of polished flooring, climb laboriously up the other side, about twice a night. Somebody – probably the young American – told the caviar king that I was a journalist, and the old man decided that I should need education on the subject of caviar. He gave me booklets to read about it and told me a lot himself. I have forgotten now what was in the books, so that perhaps I never read them. But I remember all he told me.

He was very pleased with himself for having discovered the formula for living. He had it all worked out. He and his brother shared the work of their caviar business between them. Himself, he spent six months of every year arranging the export and import of the product. This involved a lot of travelling. His brother used the next six months for selling it. Meanwhile they each took six months holiday. The brother stopped at home for his holiday; he preferred to travel, this time for pleasure. He got used to travelling, and it broadened his son's mind. I thought the child might have been better off staying at home for a time broadening his body. Mrs. Caviar King, too,

looked as if she wasn't entirely reconciled to a roving life.

The old man took great pains to point out to me that the caviar business was not what it was, and that it never had been. He seemed anxious that nobody should think he was rich, but it got around, as things do in a ship. He had quite a phobia about not being considered rich. Maybe he wanted to be liked for himself alone, someone sug-

gested.

He was most unusual for a rich man. He didn't seem to desire power; if he had he wouldn't have wanted to spend so much of his time on ships, where all the important power belongs to the captain. He even paid for people's drinks in return for the ones they bought him. (Very few rich people do that; they are not considered mean as long as they are rich enough. They let you stand them a dinner at the Ritz, stalls at the theatre, a cabaret, which may mean a month without lunches for you but is just another evening for them; and then they return your hospitality, not by giving you the job you'd counted on, but by asking you to drop in for cold supper some Sunday evening.)

I got very friendly with the old man, and one evening he started to tell me the story of his life. His father had been a rich man too, he said, and an unhappy one. He had been pretty disillusioned by the time his son was grown up, claiming that a rich man had no friends, or that at any rate he could not tell who they were. This applied, his father warned him, not only in friendship, but to an even greater extent in love. Women were dazzled by wealth;

they were quite unable to see beyond the wealth to the man behind it. His father explained that that was what was meant in the parable about the rich man, the eye of the needle and the camel, because how could you ever find heaven if women only loved you for your money?

This philosophy was so deeply impressed on the young man's mind that he planned that if ever he fell in love he would say nothing about his father's money until he was quite sure of his beloved's true affection. So that, when he first became interested in a penniless young school-teacher who lived and worked in a small village outside of his home town, he was careful not to let her know about his position.

He was fond of bicycling for exercise, and it was when he had been bicycling that he had first met the little school-teacher. Before long his bicycle took him always in the direction of the village where she lived and worked. At first it was only at week-ends, but, as the summer advanced, he would ride out several evenings a week to visit her. He never took her expensive presents, though often he would get off his bicycle and pick for her sprays of wayside flowers, and once he bought her a bunch of violets. She thanked him for these, but reproved him for spending his money when there were so many flowers to be had free for the picking. He was very happy about this reproof; he saw that he was managing his affairs cleverly, that he was a smarter man than his father.

They became engaged, and he was so happy he wanted to buy her the largest ring in the city, but

even in his new happiness he kept a hold on himself, telling himself that after they were married she should have every jewel that she fancied. Meanwhile he gave her a little gold ring set with a cat's eye which he had been accustomed to wear on his little finger. It had been his grandmother's. Even this she was reluctant to accept until he pointed out that it was, after all, the symbol of their betrothal.

Then one day she had to take some pupils into the city. When their business was finished there was still some time to spare, and she took them into the park to rest and see the flowers. And there, in the park, driving in the most magnificent carriage and pair, she saw her lover. She made inquiries. She found out about his wealth; she discovered that he had been deceiving her, that he had never known poverty or even moderate wealth. He had been born and brought up a rich man's son.

That evening she confronted him with her discovery. Never, she reproved him, had she been so horribly, so bitterly deceived in anyone. Let him go and ride around the park in his carriage and pair, consort with his rich friends, eat the plentiful meals which others had worked to prepare, while the

poor of the town starved.

At first the young man was delighted with her attitude. He could scarcely believe that underneath her annoyance at his deception she could be anything but delighted about his money. But undoubtedly her indignation was proof that she really cared for him.

But after a while he was not so happy.

He pleaded with her; he reasoned. She wouldn't listen to him. He left her, believing that in time she would come round. He wrote, and his letters were returned. He sent her presents; they were unopened. He asked friends to plead for him. She shut the door in their faces. He never saw her again. . . .

"Of course," I reflected, when he had finished his story, "you might have won her back if you

had given up your inheritance."

The music stopped, and the ship lurched us towards his table. "If only I had had the strength to do that!" he sighed. "But how unhappy my life would have been. . . ."

RECIPE

CAVIAR AU BLINIS

There is something very intriguing about the picture of men catching caviar. You imagine odd little Cossacks in fur hats darting about from ice-floe to ice-floe, and every now and again sticking a sturgeon with a long harpoon. But of course it is not always caught this way.

In England we eat caviar straight out of the pot, and it is good spread on thin, crisp slices of brown toast lightly buttered. Russians often take their caviar with odd little pancakes named blinis, together with sour cream and melted butter. In case you would like to do this, I will give you a recipe for blinis.

- 4 ounces flour
- 4 ounces buckwheat
- I ounce yeast
- 3 small eggs (or 2 large)
- pint milk, or a little more

Mix flour, yeast and sufficient warm milk to make a thin cream. Allow to rise for a few hours in a warm spot. Beat up your eggs, and add them to the mixture together with the buckwheat and some salt. Make the pancakes as small and thin as possible, spread them with a little melted butter and the caviar, roll tightly, and serve immediately with sour cream.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE FACTS MY CAVIAR KING TOLD ME

There are three sorts of caviar made from the roes of sturgeon: pressed, salted and malossol (which in Russian means slightly salted).

The malossol comes from three kinds of sturgeon: the Beluga and the Ocietrova, which have a large grain, and the Sevruga, which has a small grain.

It is usually thought that the Beluga and the Ocietrova are the two best qualities, that the Sevruga and the pressed are inferior. But as a matter of fact there can be a first and second quality of each.

To be of the first quality a good caviar must have firm eggs, dry, with a brilliant surface. The colour, which may be dark yellow, through all shades of grey, to black, is of no importance as regards quality.

Beluga. Colour, light grey, sometimes with a white dot. The fish weighs about 18 pounds and gives about 1½ pounds of caviar. Places of preparation: the Caspian

Sea, Baku and Astrakhan. There is some, but not much, which comes from the Persian fisheries and Rumania. This caviar must be eaten immediately it is opened or it turns to liquid.

Ocietrova comes in various colours. Each sturgeon gives about ½ pound caviar. The first quality caviar from the Wial is perfect and is a golden colour. Other fisheries are in the Caspian Sea, at Baku, Koura, Arax, Pehlvi, in Persia, in Rumania, in the Danube, in Bulgaria, in Yugoslavia, in the Gironde district of France and near Seville in Spain.

Sevruga. The eggs are much smaller, light or dark grey. The flavour is good, the appearance not so good, because the eggs are more stuck together. That is the only reason it sells for less. It is found in the Caspian Sea, in Persia, Rumania and Bulgaria.

Fresh Salted Caviar. This is prepared only in Russia or Persia. It is made from fish caught during the warm season, and salted 10 to 12 per cent. It is sold considerably in warm countries – India, Africa, South America and the United States.

Pressed Caviar is made in the spring, when the temperature is too high to ensure caviar of a good quality being made. The eggs are salted, put into jute sacks, then pressed. The moisture which is pressed out causes a loss in weight of 25 to 30 per cent. Pressed caviar is cheaper to buy than fresh and costs the makers more, on account of the loss of weight. Its taste and smell are augmented, and also its nutritive qualities. It is the sort which might well be used with blinis.

A hundred grammes of fresh caviar give 225 calories (Kostamaroff). The content of vitamins A and D is considerable.

The preparation of caviar is not as easy as it appears. The fish is cut open, the eggs taken out and spread on a special mat. Great care has to be taken not to crush them. Then they are salted and tasted, and great experience is needed to get them quite right.

CHAPTER XXVI

Rainbow Room New York City

I LIKE to go to the United States, and I say that as if I had been there more than twice, which I have not. Both times it was at someone else's expense, which made it even nicer. The first time my father paid; the second time the trip was financed by the newspaper on which I was working. They thought it would be good for me to find out what kind of shops and clothes New York women went in for, and I thought it would be good too.

It was this second time that I landed in the normal

manner in New York.

Most English people think that New York City is America. I have never stayed there long enough to prove definitely that it isn't, or maybe I should say that I haven't seen enough of the rest of the United States to prove that it is. Certainly New York City has no great resemblance to the Southern States in which, ten years ago, I stayed for some months, or to Hollywood, where I recently spent some weeks. But, then, they do say that the Southern States and Hollywood are not representative of America either, and nor is Washington, nor yet again New Orleans, which are practically the only other places I have

visited with any efficiency. As far as I can see I might as well never have gone to the United States at all for all I can possibly have seen of it that is

representative.

I arrived in New York in a good, thick fog; a London fog, the New Yorkers call it. I have a high standard of the wit and intelligence of the New Yorker, caused by a life-long devotion to the magazine of that name. It is not always lived up to by the people I have met. It is the same with Hollywood, which can turn out a lot of humorists, but only four Marx brothers (and now there are three). But even the wittiest and most intelligent of New Yorkers persist in visualising the English permanently groping their way around in the semi-darkness of a pea-souper.

The New York fog let me out of the conventional first-impression comments on the Statue of Liberty

and the skyline.

Instead, driving uptown, or maybe it was downtown, I got the impression of wet streets, clanging overhead railways, slick, stream-lined buildings with their heads in the clouds, looking like unfinished illuminated crossword puzzles.

The soft sound of streaming rain was violently

patterned with motor-hooters.

I had been established in New York about five minutes when I had a cable from my office saying "Send news story." Because I had still not found out which was uptown and which was downtown and which way up I was anyway, and because this was my first opportunity to use my "collect "cable card, I sent buzzing back: "What sort of story?"

That wasted a little time, so that by the time they replied "Any sort of story" I had time to get in touch with one of the nicest men in New York—the paper's correspondent, Tommy Thompson. Being an efficient man, he hadn't any odd news stories left over and lying around. "But you could go along to the Rainbow Room to-night. It's only been opened two days; you might make something out of it."

He gave me the name of the Press secretary, and I telephoned to her and got an invitation to go up there that evening for dinner. Up to the sixty-fifth floor.

I had imagined that an American Press secretary would be a very bustling sort of a person, crammed with efficiency. Miss Alice Woodward was a tall, drooping woman, who was young but a little faded. There was nothing in the least crisp about her; she wasn't even smart. She looked as if she was probably the President's niece, and as if she was used to old coloured retainers, whose grandparents had been slaves of her grandparents, calling her "Miz Allus, honey." She looked as if her hair might come down at any time, and as if she had trouble to keep her slip the right length, and I liked her very much.

The Rainbow Room was, and still is for all I know, in the Rockefeller Center. In the 1934-5 winter the Rockefeller Center was the star building of New York City. It even dwarfed the 102 storeys of the Empire State Building, though at its highest point it barely reached seventy floors.

It spreads out a good deal down below, though.

It covers twelve acres of ground, and houses the National Broadcasting Corporation of America (and is, therefore, called by some Radio City), and I don't know how many theatres and shops and offices. That winter 3,000 people were paying a dollar a

head every week to go round the Center.

Snooping round, I went in there for a cocktail about six o'clock. Dinner wasn't to be till ten. The ante-chamber or cocktail saloon of the Rainbow Room was quite crowded with women drinking cocktails to the strains of a Hawaiian band. They seemed to be drinking very exotic-looking cocktails, as if they had chosen them for their names. Repeal and fancy cocktails were still pretty new. I shouldn't wonder if they have gone back to their Martinis and highballs by now.

This ante-chamber is all done with mirrors. You see yourself five times as you step out of the ladies' fixing-room. And then, which is even more fun, you can see taxis way down below in Fifth Avenue crawling along the ceiling as if they

were flies.

It had only been opened a few days since, when five or six hundred of New York's Four Hundred had gathered together, by invitation, for the opening party. This plush event was so exclusive that Mr. Rockefeller himself was heard (by Miss Woodward) to say to Mrs. Harvey Gibson (who is important enough to allow her photograph to advertise cold cream in illustrated papers) that he had been lucky to have been able to secure an invitation.

I went out on to some sort of a roof, and on those

tall buildings you have to keep a tight hold of your skirt or it is liable to blow over your head like an umbrella in a gale. I could see fifty miles of lights weaving a fantastic pattern in any direction, hazing off into the distance. I could see the last of the sunset reflected on the Hudson River, and that strange mushroom growth of skyscrapers, which is not so impressive from above as from below, that makes up New York City.

So then I went back to my hotel and had a bath, and changed, and came back again at about ten

o'clock.

Miss Woodward had three or four other people dining with her.

The Rainbow Room itself was round. We sat up on a little platform back from the dance-floor, which

itself was round, and revolved.

The rules of this eyrie were to dress high and snap the rubber-band off the bank-roll. It was not a particularly exclusive meeting-place, the crowd only being limited to the thousands owning evening dress and a pocketful of money. There was a mixed crowd which included selections from the social register, from the theatrical Who's Who, with a good handful of straw-sprinkled hicks from the Middle West, in town to see the sights.

It's probably the only night-club in the world which has a pipe organ, and what a mighty Wurlitzer

that is !

Its roof was very new at that time, and had an ingenious system of lighting. It changed to every colour of the rainbow (get it?), and the change of colour was entirely governed by sound.

As the organ played, the pitch of the music governed the colours which lit up the ceiling. Some bright young man at the party was telling me that the roof was very sensitive to sound; all sound, not only the organ.

For instance, he said, if anyone was to start up a fight it would probably go a deep red. He suspected, too, that if a crooner came on it would turn a

pale, sickly yellow.

Well, we had dinner (it was chicken Maryland, which, I afterwards learnt, is the New York version of sole bonne femme: always served at gala meals), and we danced a little and stared a good deal. And we listened to Lucienne Boyer sing slightly purple songs in French and broken English – so broken that the pieces rattled – and then I went off to repair the damages to my face.

In the cloakroom there was a very pretty girl. I had noticed her dancing. She was dark and slender and tall, and curved in all the right places: in fact, she had one of the loveliest figures I ever

remember seeing.

At that time I found her in the cloakroom she was balanced on one leg, and had the lovely figure twisted into knots trying to repair a seam which had run in the back of her stocking.

"Maybe it would be easier for me to do it for you," I offered. She looked up at me. "Why,

thanks, honey, that would help a lot."

So she kneeled on a chair with her back to me, and I took a good grip of the stocking so as not to jab her with the needle, and started in.

"You're English, aren't you?" she asked. I

admitted it. "And I always thought English dames were so frozen that they wouldn't put out a hand from a boat to save a drowning person if they hadn't been introduced first." I gave her a jab with the needle, and she laughed and said: "It's just my luck to get a run in my seam to-night of all nights."

"Out with the best young man?" I asked.

"Not mine; someone else's. You didn't happen to notice the fellow I was dancing with? He doesn't look so different, but he's the hope of the Vandeburgs: worth forty million some day, discounting slumps. He has a little matter of five or six millions on the side right now to keep the wolf from the door."

I did remember him dimly, I said.

"Well, even if he's not outstanding to look at there are the forty millions . . . he could be a good deal homelier. Myself, I haven't a thing but my looks, so they're all-important."

"Actress?" I asked.

"Have been. If you can call the second row of the Follies being an actress. I'm a model girl now, and eat regular, or did. There's a lot more to it, even if it don't sound quite so Ethel Barrymore. Say, when did you arrive in New York?"

"Just this morning," I told her.

"You are certainly stepping out. Well, maybe you haven't heard about the fun that's going on in town between us professional models and the society blacklegs? It's been on the front pages for several days. You see, the Junior Leaguers have been posing for this ad., and modelling for that charity dress parade, and even coming in and

cutting us out with the shops and the wholesalers, our regular meal-tickets, till we looked like having to join the bread-line. They like to see themselves dressed up to the eyes: jewels by Cartier, furs by Revillon, and their pictures in all the illustrated weeklies, by heck. They didn't even get paid most of the time – as long as there were enough photo-

graphers lined up on the sidelines."

I bent down to bite off the cotton, and she turned round. "Thanks, honey. Wait till I tell you the rest of the story and you'll see why I can't afford a run. You see, things began to get so bad that the shops we professional models had been working in even started turning off their regular girls, hoping that they'd always be able to get a customer to take their place... and the ones who depended on piecework didn't get but one job in two weeks, instead of two a day, as we counted on during the rush season. And curves were coming in, causing a need to eat regular. So something had to be done pretty darn quick.

"We got a meeting together, and one of the girls had a boy friend that worked on a newspaper and he came along. And what a neat scoop that boy got! We gave out an ultimatum through his sheet that if the Junior Leaguers didn't lay off our jobs we were all going gunning for their sweethearts. And they photographed all of us in our underwear, and the sweethearts came right down and lined up in queues. So it all worked out quite well. Didn't I tell you that was young Vandeburg I had out there? He's all but engaged to Miss Caroline Payne Astney, whose pictures you might

have seen taking part in every charity dress show for the last three months, if you'd happened to see the New York society columns."

"What are you planning to do: marry him?"

"I doubt if he'd lose his head to that extent, even if his family didn't hold it down for him. But he's a swell meal-ticket, and I wouldn't exactly throw an ermine coat back in his face. I'd better not let him out of my sight any longer. Thanks a lot, honey."

I went to look for a telephone. I rang up Tommy. "I have a story all right," I said. "Listen, it's about these professional model girls..." and I started to tell him all that I'd heard.

"Yes, but I'm handling that story myself," said Tommy. "I sent them over a column to-day and some wireless pictures. Your story fits in all right, though. I'll tack it on to the end as a special interview."

"Hey, but what am I to use?" I asked.

"Why don't you just send over a piece about the opening of the Rainbow Room? The story's only two days old. 'Highest dance-room in the world...' just the sort of stuff you do best."

So I did, and the headlines were "MR. ROCKE-

So I did, and the headlines were "MR. ROCKE-FELLER'S OWN NIGHT-CLUB." I checked up afterwards, and the paper never printed a line about the model-girls' strike. It seems it didn't have a wide enough interest . . . but I still think it would have made a swell story.

RECIPES

CHICKEN MARYLAND

Fried chicken is a dish no white person ever quite succeeds in making the way a negro mammy, one who has been born and raised in the South, can turn it out.

It's still worth eating.

The chicken should be young. Unless you fancy your-self as a carver you may as well get the poulterer to cut it up. Poulterers are handy that way. Let him cut it up so that each section is enough for one portion, and a four-portion chicken is about the best size. Steam it for half an hour.

Make a batter, using:

4 level tablespoonfuls of flour
4 tablespoonfuls of salad oil or oiled butter
1 yolk of egg
2 whites of egg
A generous pinch of salt
One tablespoonful of milk or cream
§ pint warm water (about)

Put the flour in a basin, make a hole, and drop in salt, yolk of egg, oil and cream, stir till smooth, adding water gradually. The consistency should be smooth and rather stiff. Beat the whites of eggs stiffly and fold into the mixture. It is a fallacy to say that batter should be allowed to stand before adding the whites. It has recently been proved that it makes no difference whether it stands or not; it is just a matter of convenience.

Dip the pieces of chicken in the batter, arrange carefully in a frying-basket, fry in deep, boiling oil. The chicken liver, and also bananas cut in half lengthwise,

should also be dipped in the batter and fried.

With the last remains of the batter mix some sweet corn taken from a tin and strained as free from liquid as possible. Drop spoonfuls of this into shallow boiling oil, shaping into round cakes with a palette-knife. When they begin to set on one side so they can be readily lifted, turn.

All should be fried to a lovely brown, the colour of the negro mammy who should have made it (or maybe a little lighter).

MAPLE ICE CREAM

Boil up 1½ gills of thick syrup with a vanilla pod, then take away the vanilla pod and pour the syrup over the yolks of 3 eggs which you have previously beaten well. When you have them mixed you have to go on beating until you get a thick-cream consistency. Best way to do this is to hold the bowl over boiling water while you beat, and then, when it gets creamy, move from the water and whisk till firm. Add I quart of cream, stiffly whipped, and ½ pound melted maple sugar. Stir for some minutes over the ice, then turn into a mould lined with paper. Fix on the lid tightly and put the whole lot in the ice for two and a half or three hours.

If you buy your ice cream ready made in a block, a syrup made from maple sugar and served separately in a sauce-bowl, very hot, is good indeed.

CHAPTER XXVII

Ku Klux Klan

The first time I arrived in the United States of America I was a little dazed by it. I was eighteen years old, and had recently left a boarding-school which was so strict that nobody was allowed to speak to anyone else except at a few specified times. There was an honour system in the school, so, as a matter of fact, nobody wanted to. If you did speak to anyone, saying, that is, anything that was of the slightest importance, she was in honour bound to report you for having that kind of an idea in that sort of a school.

It was a very fine training for after-life, that school. It taught you to trust nobody, least of all yourself, and it took away from you all fear of a four-year sentence in gaol. Plaiting hemp, or whatever it is they make you do in gaol, would be a less arduous task than Latin, or even algebra; the rest, including the food and sleeping arrangements, would not be unsimilar.

After I left there I was escorted about pretty continuously by my mother, who was an attractive woman. All my admirers very quickly transferred their allegiance to her. I didn't care so much about any of them, but it hurt my feelings just the same. I couldn't believe it when I got to Tennessee, and

found that people were divided up into ages that separated them as surely as the class barrier in England: they never mixed on any kind of equality. There was the young married set, and the older married set, and the old married set's recently grown and still unmarried children.

I got in with the last of these, and scarcely knew which way up I was when none of my new collection of young men (they had been collected for me before my arrival by my eighteen-year-old hostess, one for each of ten successive evenings) slipped over into the mothers' set.

The first time my date sat up alone with me after midnight I was as nervous as I could be wondering what to talk about, and what my mother was going to say when I finally got upstairs. Along about twelve-thirty I got up and said well, it was time I went to bed; and it seems I made a bad social blunder in doing this. My hostess's mother told me the next day that if my date chose to stick around until three in the morning, I would do well to conceal my yawns and try to entertain him. She said this in front of my mother, which gave me a good enough alibi.

I soon found out what to talk to the dates about, and after that things began to go well, especially when I found I didn't have to get a brand-new date for every night, but could have a repeat order on some of them. I had been there several weeks before I got regular dates who called one evening a week on specified days. I got two regular dates,

a Tuesday and a Friday.

In the day-times we would sometimes see the

dates around the drug-store at noon, but mostly the days were spent with the other girls in the group. We used to be invited to a good many luncheons and bridge-parties. I found American girls were a great deal more friendly than English girls, and I liked being with them. I learnt a lot of things about how to manage the dates. They had to be "strung along" so that they would not be discouraged from coming back for more, even if you had no sort of serious intention towards them.

At the dances your dates that you'd been stringing along would give you a rush and would make you look popular. The dances were cut-in dances, and it was to be avoided above everything that you should dance more than a few steps at a time with any one man. But you had to make sure that he would be back in a few minutes, and if you were doubtful about him you started off very quickly with some opening gambit like: "I've heard something very amusing about you." Next time he cut in you played for time, saying maybe you didn't know him well enough to say. That way curiosity got him back into your "rush" a good many times more.

Aside from the dance rushes the next tangible proof of success was your collection of fraternity pins. These pins were worn by the young men, emblems of some sort of collegiate clubs they had been elected to. Some fraternities, and consequently some pins, were better than others. These pins were only supposed to be given away to the girls the young men planned to marry; the gift should be the first step to an engagement.

But by "stringing them along" you should be able to make a collection of at least three or four pins. I must, I was led to believe, get myself at least one to prove my merit.

These things, and a lot more, I learnt from the girls during the bridge games in the afternoons.

One afternoon Friday came round before dinner to tell me that there was a barbecue party fixed for the following Friday, and would I like to go along to it? I said I would, and what did barbecue mean? From what I could gather, it was a kind of picnic that took place in the evening, and so a few days later we went along there about eight

o'clock, just when it was getting dark.

We drove a long way in Friday's car. First we went along tarred roads for a good few miles, and then we turned off on to dirt roads and bumped for some more miles. Then we came to a wood. There were a lot of cars lined up on the edge of the dirt road, and we lined up behind them, climbed out, and plunged into the wood. Friday took my arm to help me along the rough track. We could see flares in the distance flickering in among the trees, and I thought I smelled smoke. The trees were tall and well spaced. There was no underbush, but all the trees were laced together at the top with hanging grey moss. This eerie-looking moss was lit up by flares when we reached them, and it looked grey and straggly and tangled, like the hair of a thousand witches.

Round the big fire there was a crowd of negroes. They were roasting an animal whole over the fire and baking potatoes in the embers. As they

worked they sang, and one of them played the banjo

for accompaniment.

Beyond the fire some tables had been improvised, and the white people were sitting round these on boxes and logs and cushions from the cars. They were all drinking. It was prohibition days then, and most of them were drinking straight out of flasks and taking chasers of ginger ale from bottles.

We joined the group, and I drank the chasers without the liquor because I had always heard tales of how bootleg liquor made you blind, or twisted you up into strange shapes. I never liked the taste of alcohol, anyway, and certainly couldn't have swallowed the raw wood-alcohol they drank down in Tennessee in those days.

I had a great helping of barbecued pig, though,

and of potatoes baked in the embers.

Presently the white people started singing too. They joined in with the negro songs and spoilt the harmony. They were pretty excited, the white men, and it wasn't only the wood-alcohol. There was something else going on. I wanted to know what it was, and I made Friday come over and sit on a log a little way from the others. He'd had a good few swigs at the wood-alcohol, and, besides, he thought I was going to coax him to let me have his fraternity pin again. He was braced against that, but not against telling me what was going on.

There was going to be a meeting of the Klan, he let out.

"The Ku Klux Klan?" I asked, whispering.

"Of course," he said.

"When?" I whispered again.

"Later to-night; after we've taken the women home. There's been trouble in the negro quartersa white woman-

"What will they do?" I asked, fascinated.

"Teach the niggers their place," said Friday. "That's why the Klan is riding again."

- "Dressed all in white?" I had heard about this Klan. It sounded a lot like the Black Hand Gang of which I'd been a supporter as a child. We had sworn vengeance on the Red Death Gang, which had its headquarters in the nearest house to us, half a mile away. There had been forays and excursions, attacks and defences. Once we had broken into their loft and stolen their ammunition (catapults), and they had retaliated by holding our cat to ransom. We had finally amalgamated to make a joint attack on some newcomers to the neighbourhood whose formerly empty house had been one of our favourite playgrounds. We had dressed up as ghosts, I remember, and tried to drive them away from the house. . . . All dressed in white, with masks.
 - "And will you wear masks?" I asked Friday.

"Of course; over all our faces. Hoods too."

"What fun it sounds," I said enviously.

"Promise to tell me all that happens."

"Can't do that. It's against the rules. I've told you too much already. It's even supposed to be a secret about our clothes, only of course it isn't, because people see us wearing them. Come on, they are beginning to start back. We've all got to meet at the Klavern by midnight, and it's after ten now."

He took me home. I lay awake for a long time wondering what was going on. It all seemed a lot of fun, and America was an amusing place where grown men played games that boys in England gave up before they were fourteen.

I met Friday next morning down at the drugstore. He looked very white, and his hand was shaking as he handed me my chocolate milk shake. He'd had too much wood-alcohol, I supposed.

He rode me uptown in his car and I asked him about what had happened. "Did it go off well?" I asked. "And did you get your revenge?"

"Plenty! Too much, perhaps," he said grimly.

"You're not to ask me about it any more."

"But, Friday, I'm so interested," I pleaded. "Just tell me a little more, just the unprivate things. I do want to know."

"Stop it, will you? I don't want to talk about

it or think about it ever again."

"You are mean," I wailed. "Can't you even

give me a hint?"

"Look," he said desperately. "If you'll promise never to mention it again I'll give you that fraternity

pin you wanted."

I was delighted. It was only when, a good few years later, I saw on the front page of the New York Daily Mirror a photograph of a battered, half-charred negro suspended from a floodlit tree, that I realised just how much I had paid for my fraternity pin....

RECIPE

YOUNG RABBIT BARBECUED

To barbecue an animal means to cook it whole. It is originally a negro term, and comes from the West Indies.

The negro cook at the house where I was staying told

me all about cooking animals whole.

Nowadays it is rarely practical; certainly a pig would be too large for most families' appetites or cookingstoves. A very young rabbit may be successfully fixed

up this way though.

It should lie in salt water for an hour (first cutting off its head). Dry carefully, score the back and legs closely, season with salt, pepper and French mustard, and paint it liberally with good oil. Let it remain for another hour, and again season and oil. Broil it over a clear fire for twenty to twenty-five minutes, replenishing the oil whenever the rabbit seems at all dry. Coming down to it, it does sound a little cannibalistic.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Success Story in Harlem

ARLEM is a place I only got around to once and then I went to the wrong places. Harlem is a little like Montparnasse: there are the places for tourists, which are good value in their way, and there are the places the inhabitants go to.

The inhabitants have to move round pretty fast, though, to keep ahead of the tourists. Tourists have a keen nose for a good place to spoil, and it only takes about a month before they smell a good new place, and then, whoops! down they come and up go the prices, corks fly out of bottles and the

regular eaters fly out of the door.

So, my nose being not so keen, I got to a place where the noise of champagne corks popping almost drowned the band. The celebrities were pointed out to me, and among them was Miss Sadie Hall, a likely-looking coloured girl who, I was told, was a member of my own profession. She worked, in fact, on the Harlem Gazette, News, Mail, or Dispatch (anyway, it wasn't Express: a Daily Express, I found, is, in New York, a removal company, run by a man named Daily).

Miss Sadie Hall, someone told me, had once been hired help to Alice Hughes, New York columnist.

I know Alice Hughes. She is one of the big four among fashion writers. If any of the big dress shows draw all of the Big Four, Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, the New Yorker, and Alice Hughes, they are entitled to think well of themselves. Until the last moment, long after the other chairs are filled to overflowing, any up-and-coming New York dress establishment keeps four empty seats in the best positions. If none of them is taken they might as well never have given their show. If only one of them goes, they hope it will be to Alice Hughes, whose copy will appear in the paper the very next day.

Alice Hughes is a small, tired, witty girl who looks like nothing very much, but dominates any company in which she finds herself. She does as much work in a day as an English fashion writer does in a week, and she does it for seven days a

week, and takes time off to broadcast too.

The time Sadie worked for Alice Hughes her second name wasn't Hall. That came later.

Sadie was a very good maid, and she made the best club sandwiches in all America. Furthermore, she always had the ingredients for them in the ice chest, so that when Alice Hughes popped in unexpectedly for a bite to eat, which she did very often, there was always a club sandwich within five minutes' gulp.

She also became very expert at answering the telephone, seeming to know by instinct whether Miz' Allus was in or out, or just having a bath. After a year or two Alice Hughes gave her, for telephone purposes only, the title of secretary.

Sadie took the position literally, and, hearing that secretaries usually were knowledgeable about shorthand and typing, she got herself a course. It took time to learn up the shorthand and typing in between fixing club sandwiches, but finally she did it.

She made herself very useful by typing out Alice Hughes's articles; in fact she almost made herself indispensable, only, as it turns out, nobody ever is.

Because in the end she dispensed with herself. I don't mean she committed suicide, only that she left Alice Hughes's employ. She got herself a new job as a Harlem columnist, and along with her new job she got a new name: Miss Hall she became, and, by inference, a close relative of Miss Hughes, since even us columnists have private lives and Alice happened to have a husband who owned that name.

Well, that was all a great pity, and Alice Hughes has never found anyone else that combined all the qualities necessary to provide real crisp toast, a neat telephonic repartee, and a hand for a typewriter.

She often gets a laugh, though, when some firm or other sends her a pull of their reprinted press cuttings, her own little piece given a very inferior position to the full-page spread of Miss Sadie Hall.

RECIPES

AMERICAN CLUB SANDWICH

A club sandwich is as quick a supper as you're likely to be able to get together if a hungry husband comes in from a boxing match (or wherever your husband does spend his evenings). It will take just about five minutes to prepare if you happen to have some bits of cold chicken in the ice-box.

You make three very thin, crisp slices of wholemeal toast. Three pieces of a fine-cut back bacon, grilled, go between the bottom two. Between the next two place a crisp lettuce-leaf, some thin slices of the white meat of chicken, some finely sliced tomato, its skin removed, another slice of lettuce, a dollop of mayonnaise. On the very top of all a generous dollop of melting butter.

COFFEE

Coffee-grounds shouldn't be boiled any more than tealeaves should. There are lots of machines for making coffee that are excellent, and they don't boil the grounds. The old way of making coffee in a jug is fine, though, especially if the coffee is newly roasted and ground.

The success of coffee, whatever it's made in, depends on that, and in putting in enough coffee. You can add a pinch of mustard if you like, and, later, salt. The water poured on to the coffee in the jug should be just on the boil. Beat for three or four minutes, put in the pinch of salt, a drop or two of cold water to help the grounds to settle, stand aside until they have, strain into a coffee-pot; and now, if necessary, heat up again.

CHAPTER XXIX

Hollywood Boulevard

That even now that practically everybody has been there, and those who haven't have read several million words about it, it is still a legend.

Satires have been written about it; but the best satires have always been written by people who haven't been there. After they have written their satire they go to see how near they have been and to collect their money. After that they are never able to write any more satires; not, at any rate, about Hollywood. They can never again see the

Hollywood for the fees.

The real trouble is that, ultimately, everybody has his price. Hollywood found that out. The price may not be solid cash, but it generally has a cash basis. Some people just don't want to go to Hollywood; they want to stop where they are, maybe with the people they love. But, if Hollywood wants them enough, she'll get them in the end. She'll offer so much money, so much freedom, so much fame, so much independence, so much bait for the loved ones in the mixtures finally calculated to appeal. But all the time she'll be adding up the cash total: fame, so many dollars; independence, so many more; freedom, more dollars still. It

will all tot up to the box-office receipts allowing for

a nice, handsome profit.

Myself, I went to Hollywood to meet Steve. We'd planned to meet in New Orleans, but we'd come from opposite ends of the earth, and it just happened that Hollywood was the half-way house between London and Tahiti.

It wasn't Hollywood I was going to see, so I should have been able to see it clear enough. But I didn't. In spite of all I'd read I hadn't really known what to expect. Sometimes I imagined a skyscraper city, a miniature New York without a film star in sight. Sometimes I pictured a row of giant-size bowler hats with film stars popping in and out like mad.

And back of all that I imagined funny little men sitting in offices surrounded by money-bags which they were longing to give away - to the right

people.

The first thing I really saw of Hollywood was Hollywood Boulevard, which looked, at first sight, like a Coney Island, holiday-town sort of main street, with every third shop a different variety of five and ten cent store (but without the buckets, spades and rock that you kind of expected to see). There were a lot of flags flying overhead, and street-cars were meandering down the middle of the road, and you got the idea that a penny ride would take you down to the sea; which actually was eight or ten miles away.

The people on the pavements looked quite like a holiday crowd too. The men wore open-neck shirts and slacks, and a lot of the girls had on

pyjama suits, without hats. Some of the suits were pretty boudoir, too; there was one of skintight black satin. It was a plump girl who wore it, too.

It was sunny, and the sky was blue and the mountains way off in the far background were still bluer. And the shops in between the five-and-tens had gay, inconsequential names. There was the Lov-é Brassière Shoppe, for instance, which was displaying very realistic figures for sale, nature-coloured. There was the Lassn Lady Frock Shop; Reid & Wright, the stationers, Messrs. Pay'n Takit's Grocerie Store. It was a lot like a game of happy families.

A tie was a neckwear importation. The Knobby Knitshoppe said, "We knit to fit," and there was another which boasted "We board birds." They

did, too, for a dollar a week.

Till you got to know it better, it all looked very gay and inconsequential. But a lot of the elegant side-walkers – the beautiful blondes; the fine, athletic-looking young collegiates – couldn't even afford to eat, most of them. They were extras who got one job in a month and used most of what they earned to pay the hairdresser's bill. There are more beauty-prize winners serving hot dogs – and glad to get the job – and more handsome young athletes serving petrol round Hollywood than you would get on a movie that ever came out of there. In order that some of them may eat at all there has to be a lot of co-operation. There's a famous dish in British Guiana named the pepper-pot which is heated up and replenished every day. That way it

lasts for years. There's one that's reputed to be

one hundred years old or more.

Hollywood is not that old itself, but the Hollywood extras' pot-au-feu goes on until the last extra who has thrown in an onion here, a marrow-bone there, some cabbage-leaves from goodness knows where, becomes a star and "eats regular." Or goes back to Milwaukee.

It's a romantic kind of dish if you know its history. Here's an onion that represents a day as a Grenadier Guard. There are some chicken-bones. They come from a luxurious meal: three days in

a beer-garden in old Vienna paid for them.

The turnips and carrots and the old cabbage-leaves aren't so triumphant. A young man from Yale had to wash dishes for three hours in a downtown café to get those for payment. Still, they improve the stew. The potatoes were a present, and the tomatoes and the peas – there aren't many left – were once two whole tins, the profit from a day as a bathing belle on a sun-drenched Lido. The sun was an arc-lamp and the rest of the five dollars went to buy a bathing-dress which may never be used again, but still, the peas and the tomatoes were a real triumph, a marriage of the histrionic and culinary arts.

You certainly see a good-looking crowd the first time you walk down Hollywood Boulevard. But anyone who knows will tell you it is not what it seems. Because nobody walks in Hollywood who

could possibly afford to ride.

Walking is only just short of a criminal offence.

There is a little old man who was considered a

Ow

pretty suspicious character in Hollywood. He is director Rouben Mamoulian's father, and he has a European look and he wears a pointed beard. But he is not suspicious for these reasons. It is because he likes to walk.

When he first arrived in Hollywood he set out from his son's house and walked all down the avenue. At the end of the street he turned and walked back. He walked up and down several times, and he made a habit of doing this each evening. The policeman on the street got very worried about this, and used to follow him up and down each evening. One evening he stopped him at the top of the avenue and said:

"Now see here, old man, this has got to stop."

"What am I doing wrong?" asked the old

gentleman.

"All this walking about when you don't have to," said the policeman. "It's suspicious, that's what it is."

"I was just going for a walk," protested the old man.

"Now, then, where do you live?" asked the cop. Mr. Mamoulian pointed to his son's home, and found himself being firmly led there by the arm and pushed inside the house.

"You stop home evenings," said the policeman, "and don't come out here prowling around. Going for a walk, indeed! You couldn't have any good

reasons for doing that, I'll warrant."

RECIPE

HOLLYWOOD EXTRAS' POT-AU-FEU

You can put almost anything into the pot-au-feu, but you mustn't leave out onions and a can of tomatoes. Bones go in, and outer leaves from vegetables, any water that's left from cooking the vegetables, and, if you live in the country, a few mushrooms are an improvement. There is no vegetable which won't improve it, and few herbs. The vegetables can be cooked or uncooked, but the pot must be brought slowly to the boil at least once a day, and, if any new, uncooked vegetables are added, it should simmer for an hour or two. This way it will go on for weeks and no good will be lost from it. But, to keep it really good, onions should be added every other day, and a can of tomatoes every week. The original pepperpot from which it derived had, of course, fresh peppers put in it. Without these a touch of chilli is an improvement if you like high seasoning. It brings out the flavour.

CHAPTER XXX

The Stars between Courses: Hollywood

P ERFORMING seals have to be fed. So do the film stars in the Hollywood Zoo. There's nothing spectacular about the way they feed. Really they eat just the same way other people do. Still, there is a sort of morbid fascination in watching them.

The great in Hollywood, or the near-great, changes its eating-place daily, or at least twice weekly. A restaurant opens. For a while it is crowded. All the stars go to it, clamour for a place near the door (not so that they can see, but so that they can be seen). Then there are others – tourists maybe, like myself – who sit around the sides watching the lions, the hyenas, and the jackasses of the Hollywood Zoo being fed.

In two or three weeks the restaurant languishes, and another one takes its place. The only way to keep a restaurant going is to own a trade paper, only publish in it the names of the stars who eat in your restaurant. That way you can keep going for months.

The week I was eating out, the most important cars in Hollywood were parking daily outside the

Vendôme at lunch-time. The owner, his trade paper a going concern, a formidable weapon, stood near the door marking up his black list; but there couldn't have been many names on it that week. Even those stars who were working had come tearing down between shots to get their names in print.

The animals were fed in stalls which lined the

walls of the narrow room.

In the next stall from us Douglas Fairbanks, Senior, was entertaining a bunch of pretty nieces from the East and chatting over the top of his stall to Dolores Del Rio. They were talking about Mexico, where they had just not met the previous week.

Those stars who were working on location had sent their wives down to make it all right with the trade paper. Mrs. Frederic March and Mrs. Gary Cooper had a stall to themselves.

Across the way, the man who has done more for bathroom vendors than any man in the United

States: Cecil B. de Mille.

Of course, there are people in the film business in Hollywood who are above trade papers: they just don't care. There's Garbo, for instance, who eats at home, and Chaplin, who is almost the only star left who goes regularly to Musso Frank's and sits in a dark corner where the sun won't shine on his newly browned hair. There's nothing spectacular about Musso Frank's unless it is Chaplin and the cooking.

Schnozzle Durante likes a tough place called Levy's Tavern, sits down and shouts lustily for his food. Writers go there. Jim Tully, once a hobo, once a pugilist, still a bit of both, who, with fist and typewriter, has smashed his way to being the highest paid writer on Hollywood, is often there at nights.

Patient waitresses stand behind him trying to get his order, while he gives forth loud-voiced denunciations of Hollywood and all its inhabitants, and gets

up to fight anyone who disagrees with him.

Then there is Sam Goldwyn, who has a special dining-room at the studio in which to eat. It leads out of his office, which is decorated to look like a drawing-room, even to the grand piano which probably nobody ever plays. It all looks as much suited to Sam as his clothes, which make him the third best-dressed man in the United States.

I lunched in his dining-room too. There was a fruit-bowl in the centre of the lunch-table filled with figs. As soon as we sat down, Sam grabbed a fig and started in. Steve and I grabbed too. We're fond of figs.

Sam told us about a golf game he'd had. Twice he completely missed his drive from the first tee. Third time it rolled a couple of yards. "It was the hardest course I ever played on," he said

sadly.

Later, talking about that favourite Hollywood subject (films, in case you couldn't guess), he gave us a solemn warning. "A verbal contract with Blank's is not worth the paper it's written on," said he.

He ordered a photographer with the soup, and we had our pictures taken after the coffee. In between, we ate liver and bacon to make us feel at home.

Shirley Temple has to eat alone, or, rather, with only her mother there to help things along. Shirley is a slow eater, and can't seem to gulp her meals down in under two hours. If she had company for meals it would probably take her all day long, and that wouldn't get the Temple family anywhere.

Besides, Shirley works for Fox, and the Fox Restaurant, where the Fox players eat when they are not dashing off to the Vendôme, is a pretty

exciting place even for a grown-up.

It's called the Café de Paris, and it has fanciful murals painted all round the walls depicting various towns and countries. Faces of Fox stars who have had more than five smash hits are introduced into these: Janet Gaynor, Will Rogers, Warner Baxter,

Shirley Temple.

There are machine-age men, new version, in Russia, and corn in Egypt. Spain has a fierce-looking bull, and a toreador who looks just about played out. And Rome has a Colosseum, a Fascist salute, Romulus and Remus and their wolf. But nobody seems able to explain why Australia is represented by a Mexican gentleman tap-dancing across the Bridge of Sighs.

We saw Will Rogers entertaining some politicians, and over in a side-room there seemed to be a great deal of excitement, which was Ginger Rogers (no relation) announcing her engagement to Lew Ayres. We saw Bert Marshall, who had come over to have lunch with Gloria Swanson,

and Jimmy Dunn, who gave a girl friend a smack-

ing kiss.

At the next table there were three small-part girls wearing the costume of 1902. The picture they were in was supposed to take place in 1892, but they didn't let that worry them.

Roast beef was rolled around on a great silver trolley which had been imported from Simpson's in

the Strand for Cavalcade.

The waitresses were tricked out very cutely in pink frilly aprons and caps. They had little brooches with a name printed on them. Ours was named Merriam. Funnily, the waitress at the next table was named Merriam too, and it didn't seem such a very common name. When I noticed that the name on the brooches of all the waitresses was Merriam, I began to think there must be some rule of the house in connection with this. When they were engaged, maybe, they were asked: "Can you wait at table, and is your name Merriam?"

In the end I asked someone why it was. And it seemed that I had been quite wrong. Going on at that time was an election for the Governorship of California, and the other candidate, Upton Sinclair, had threatened to do something very, very drastic about taxing the film magnates' fortunes. So everyone who worked around a studio rooted for

Merriam, the other man. Or else . . .

RECIPES

CALVES' LIVER A LA SAM GOLDWYN

(The best way to cook Calves' Liver, Sheep's Kidneys and the Cabbage or Sprouts to go with them)

I didn't actually see Sam's liver being cooked, but it

was good.

Nine times out of ten, liver and leather are synonymous. In fact, really good leather would probably make better eating than liver. There's one way to cook it which will make it as tender eating as a new-born babe. If you've ever eaten a new-born babe. That must have been the way his was cooked.

It is all so simple, too. You take best calves' liver cut into thin strips, season it, place it in a fireproof dish in which there is about a tablespoonful of water and a large dab of butter. Cook in a slow oven for about one and a half hours, turning about every twenty minutes. If necessary (but it should not be) another few drops of water may be added.

Cabbage, to go with it, or Brussels sprouts, may be cooked in an exactly similar mnaner, but will not take more than an hour. The flavour will be so much

enhanced that you will hardly recognise it.

Incidentally, there is only one way to cook a sheep's kidney to get all its flavour and tenderness. Maybe you know it. Certainly if you have ever asked your butcher to deliver the kidneys intact inside their own fat, and just dumped them in a medium oven as is, you will never eat a kidney any other way. Some people serve the kidney in its fat, some remove part, some remove it all. But a little of the fat is tasty, too.

FOX STUDIO MENU

Stars are not what they were. Toasts are not drunk to them out of slippers; dishes are not named after them the way they once were. I suppose there are too many of them nowadays. On the menu of Fox Studio's Café de Paris, which gives several hundred dishes, the only star who is represented is Melba, and she's a little dated these days. At first sight I thought I'd found another in the Zaza Sandwich (Roquefort cheese, chicken and lettuce, toasted), but that was just my bad spelling.

There's one producer, though, who goes down to posterity as creator of the Lasky cocktail, and a director who is represented with creamed chicken Blystone. There's a lobster Louis which may mean something, too.

I picked on a dish that sounded more English, though. It was chicken à la King.

CHICKEN A LA KING

This is just a way of using up cold chicken, but it is a way about which I never yet heard anyone complain. You cut all the chicken off the bird and remove any skin off that which may be lurking. Make a white sauce with wholemeal flour, butter, milk and grated Parmesan cheese (or any hard white cheese you want to save from the mice); add two pimentos, cut up small – you can get these canned – salt, a pinch of nutmeg and a dash of paprika. I don't know why people always say a "dash" about paprika, but it does sound kind of dashing at that. Put the chicken into the concoction and leave it long enough to warm it through, stirring all the time. Fish, or any cold bird, tastes all the better for this sauce.

CHAPTER XXXI

Mexico City: Rich Man

The first time we met Señor Noche was when he came into our hotel and asked for us. Somebody had written to him about us, and he came round to offer us tickets for a bull-fight. These, he said, were hard to get, and, though he had managed to secure an extra pair, they were not in the same block as his own.

He was a tubby, plump little man, dressed all in black, with a wide black hat. He had considerable dignity, though. Two men were with him, whether servants, secretaries, or bodyguards we never discovered: perhaps a little of all three. One of them was carrying the tickets for us. Señor Noche, who had been speaking to us in good English, turned to them and commanded them in Spanish to deliver them up.

"And you must dine first at my house," he

invited us.

And he left us after first telling us that we must be sure to go into Chapultepec Park on the Sunday

morning.

Sunday is a very gay day in Mexico City. Even about the church service there is the note of carnival. The service takes place in a sort of central arena, and consists mostly of singing. There are a number of

priests and singers all very elaborately and picturesquely dressed. In the outer circle people are continually strolling around, some with children in their arms or pulling at their skirts. Most of them chat gaily. Two women wore one shawl between them. A barefooted man prayed at the High Altar. A man sold lemonade on a stand, and everything was obscured by a cloud of incense.

All day, in every part of the city, the street

vendors parade their merchandise.

They sell sweets: slabs of coco-nut icing and fudge, popcorn made of grass seeds and brown syrup, sugar-cane bunched like wigwam poles, sticky with heat and flies. And what looks like bad, or possibly preserved, banana. The fruitsellers offer crescents of pineapple, limes, oranges already peeled; another peeled fruit unrecognisable to me but something like a large potato; slices of paw-paw, which is like melon.

Then there are the ices. These are highly popular concoctions of ice crushed in a tumbler, so that it takes the tumbler's shape, and then flavoured with

pink and green syrups in stripes.

There are countless boot-cleaners, and women with charcoal stoves bubbling up strange mixtures,

serving a hot meal for a halfpenny.

Others sell little round stones, properly charmed by witch-doctors, for those who wish to avoid "being hit by the air." Wind stones, these are. They have been found in the oldest archæological ruins. For those who can use them, Mexico City is the place for them; it is nearly 8,000 feet above sealevel, and cold; not by English standards, certainly

- the sun shines warmly most of the day - but by the sub-tropical standard of the rest of lower-lying Mexico.

Chapultepec Park, where the gay company of the city meets every Sunday morning, was originally the park of the Aztec Emperors. It contains cypress-trees more than a thousand years old. Some of them measure forty feet round the bole. The higher branches trail with grey moss, which completes their venerable, old-gentlemanly appearance.

Somewhere hidden among the trees (we didn't

see it) an Aztec Palace is supposed to stand.

Riding up and down are the charros, the showy, asphalt-bred cowboys. These wear skin-tight leather trousers, black or brown, all overlaid with silver or gold braid, and many buttons. The embossed Mexican saddle between them and their high-powered horses has, as part of its equipment, a long coil of rope on a hook, with which, presumably, to lasso non-existent cattle. They wear sandals with crossed leather thongs.

But it is their sombreros which really complete the tinselly showiness of the charros: gorgeous affairs, some of them three feet wide, all embroidered with silver and gold flowers, and with ribbons

hanging down the back.

I planned to buy one of these sombreros, but the best of them may cost as much as ten pounds and only quite a humble one can be obtained for five. The straw hats of the same shape worn by the Indians can be had for a few pence, and they are just as picturesque in their way. (They are useful, too. They can be, and often are, used to carry home

the groceries, while the breadman has his hat made large enough in the brim to take his whole delivery.)

The women all wear evening dress. It seems they rarely buy a day dress, but always a new evening dress, wearing last season's out of doors on Sundays. They are festooned with necklaces and earrings.

At lunch-time we went along to Señor Noche's. "My house is yours," he said as he greeted us. But as soon as we saw it we knew we couldn't have used it.

All his family – his wife, his children, his mother, his unmarried sisters – lived together, which is the Mexican custom. They lived in an enormous, ugly house, furnished with no taste, massive, misshapen furniture, plush, gilt, large tasteless oil paintings, substantial dingy draperies inclined to run to bobbles.

The main room, in which we sat, and from which ran the other rooms, was dominated by a portrait of Diaz. They all, even the querulous old mamma who asked why we talked that ridiculous language all the time, pointed proudly to this portrait.

The little that I had read of Diaz's history left me doubtful as to how to take this. All that I had read proved Diaz to be one of the most ruthless brigands (in quite a land of brigands) whom even Mexico has ever been able to produce. Diaz was the most powerful of the early Fascist leaders, and had a complete stranglehold on the Press of the country. Further (I read somewhere), the Press was a reptile which sank poisoned fangs into the reputations of anyone who would not conform to the dictator's will.

So that all I could think of to do at that moment was to admire the painting of the portrait, the

magnificence of the uniform.

The Spanish-Mexicans eat a light breakfast followed by an enormous meal: hors d'œuvres, soup, omelette, fish, entrées, meats, puddings, cheese and numerous sweets. The table is laden with lovely old silver, glass, china, brought from Spain by ancestors. The floral decoration is stiff, inharmonious.

Señor Noche sat at the head of his vast mahogany dining-table. Steve and I sat on each side of him, and his wife was next to me. Further down the table were all the rest of the family that was at home. There were eight of us altogether, and six footmen served us. These were dressed in strange uniform and wore frayed white cotton gloves.

The food, when it appeared on great silver platters so large that the footmen staggered under their

weight, would have fed forty guests.

I sneezed, and one of the family shouted "Jesus!" I must have looked startled, for Señor Noche explained that it just meant "good health,"

and was an old Spanish custom.

Señor Noche – he told us – was a big landowner. He owned a bacienda somewhere back of Vera Cruz. He paid his workmen seventy-five centavos a day, which he considered generous. In the old days of Diaz it had been a third of that figure. Diaz's day, he told us, was the peak time for the baciendado. We began to see the meaning for the portrait a little clearer.

He didn't tell us about the free villages which

were stripped of their land, which was added to the baciendas; he didn't tell us how the native Indian was forced into slavery at a starvation wage, or none at all; how food prices rose while bacienda owners put tariffs against cheap American grain. He did tell us, though, that it was in Diaz's day that railroads increased, production rose, the gold standard was introduced, and the budget balanced. It was true, too, even if it was at the expense of the Indians, who by the end of Diaz's reign were not allowed to walk in the main avenue of Mexico City, nor go in the public gardens.

The Indian of Diaz's day was subject to conscription, not only for army but for public services, for which he received no payment; was even sold into slavery. The Taquis were sold for about £12 a head and deported to Yucatan. Afterwards, penniless, they walked the two thousand miles

back home.

Still, it was a fine time for the *baciendados*. They were enriched beyond all expectation. Those were

the days, sighed Señor Noche.

After lunch several motor-cars drew up under the glass awning at the front door. Steve and I were put into one by ourselves, because our seats were to be reached from a different entrance. Señor Noche said that he would see us afterwards in order to find out how we had enjoyed ourselves; whether we had appreciated the finer points of the sport.

Our car was elaborate, roomy, as large as a hearse and not unlike one in appearance. It had the most uncomfortable seats I ever remember sitting on. You had to exert every effort of will to prevent yourself rolling off them on to the wide expanse of floor.

There is a lot of talk about the ethics of bull-fighting, particularly in countries which practise other forms of blood sport. Myself, I have never thought it as cruel a sport as, say, fox- or deer-hunting, or even shooting birds which have been bred for no other purpose. The bull doesn't have much of a chance, certainly; he almost always gets killed in the end. But at least he gets his go at his man. He is tormented, worried and harried, but in his turn he can do quite a little harrying on his own account. I never remember hearing of a fox which turned and bit a huntsman, or a bird which got its own back in any way.

And, again, there is a great deal that is colourful and exciting about a bull-fight which makes its fascination very easy to understand; though it is certainly cold-blooded enough to spend a warm, sunny afternoon sitting in an arena watching death.

The more skilful the fight, the less you are reminded of its unpleasantness. But Steve and I sat through three good fights and couldn't very well contemplate the idea of three more. So we got up and left.

We saw Señor Noche next day. He apologised very profusely for having missed us at the end of the fight. He couldn't understand how it had happened, he said. But we must forgive him; the crowds, and so on.

Certainly, we said, we forgave him. It was easy to miss anyone on an occasion like that. We thanked him very much for his hospitality, and he said, "Not at all. My house is yours. Good health!"

The meal at the Spanish-Mexican's was created for stronger stomachs than I, and probably you, possess. They don't eat often but they do eat much. There were ten courses; they are not all worth recording. The hors d'œuvres were just hors d'œuvres. The soup was thick and full of vegetables. There was an omelette with chopped pimentos in it which was quite delicious. There were lobster tortas, and a chicken dish which I liked, and some more meat, and then on into an indefinite number of pudding, pastry, fruit and cheese courses.

RECIPES .

LOBSTER TORTAS

Here is the way to make the lobster tortas for four. Flake up a small lobster (you could use three or four Dublin Bay prawns). Beat up a couple of eggs, add them gradually to a beaped tablespoonful of flour, make a few passes with the salt and red-pepper pots. Heat up some lard in a fry-pan, put a dollop of the mixture in at a time, and fry slowly till crisp and light brown. This sort of torta is by no means the same as the Mexican torta which all the Indians eat (we come to that in the next section). It's more of a Spanish dish.

SPICED CHICKEN

For eight people, if you are a Spanish-Mexican millionaire with a hacienda which grows its own chickens,

you can, and almost certainly will, serve about a dozen chickens. I, who have to catch the chicken straight out of the poulterer's window, have to be content with one. Well, make it one, a nice large, juicy boiling-fowl; it's easier on the mathematics.

Have it cut up. Brown the pieces, and also a chopped-

up onion, in oil. Drain.

You then need about 1 pint to 1½ pints of nice rich stock. Add to it a bay-leaf, a good pinch of mace, pepper, clove, cardamons and a teaspoonful of chopped parsley. Put in the chicken and onion and simmer until the chicken begins to think it is a tender young poussin just out of the egg. Meanwhile, if you have not been wasting your time, you have seeded 6 chilli-peppers, chopped them up very fine, and ground them with 1 pound sesame. Incidentally, it is not easy, and sometimes not even possible, to do Mexican cooking without a toy which they call a metate, but which we usually name a mortar and pestle (I think). But if you can't get around to grinding up the sesame seed you can use sesame oil instead - about 1 a cupful. Fry this, either with or without frying-oil, according to whether you were able to grind up the seeds or not. Dump the result in the cook-pot. Stir, and cook until the sauce is smooth and thick. Serve with chopped, cooked aubergine and pimento.

CHAPTER XXXII

Mexico City: Poor Man

THERE are three ways of eating in Mexico City: once Spanish, once Mexican, and the rest of the time American.

The American way is carried out at Sanborn's, a combination drug-store, curio shop and eating establishment. Myself, I always want to eat native as much as I can, but the tongue wouldn't stand up to too long a course of hot Mexican sauces, and the figure wouldn't stand up to too much oily Spanish cooking.

Sanborn's, as a matter of fact, is enough of a compromise to suit any tourist but the most ardent: the decoration is Spanish and the names of the dishes are Mexican. Also they give you, as a present from Mr. Sanborn, as much fresh lime squash as you can drink and three little strawberries in a glass

ashtray.

My first and last real Mexican meal (and I don't say I didn't enjoy it, but I just found myself wandering back to Sanborn's) was at a funny little restaurant whose low coloured-glass panelled doors swung inwards from a small, smelly side-street. It had a name I don't remember, but the meaning of the name I recall well: At the Sign of the Bubbling Cauldron.

There was one, too. Right in the doorway as you went in, with a brown volcano heaving up pieces of pimento and chilli among a rich lava of scum. This sauce was served with almost everything, and it was plenty hot. They call it mole.

The bread they had was made in flat, round pancakes, and the idea is to roll up the pancake and scoop. It's the oldest form of bread known, and there is nothing particularly hygienic about the

way they make these tortillas.

Any Indian woman can make them right from the maize. She takes the kernels, pounds them in a stone metate, or grinding bowl, adds a little limewater, slaps the meal out in her hands into round, flat cakes, and cooks them over a charcoal brazier. You can see them slap-slapping at their cornmeal in the streets of Mexico City, or in the smallest village. The tortillas taste pretty flat, but that's no disadvantage seeing the highly seasoned foods they have to accompany.

It is these tortillas that are made into tortas which is the Mexican version of the hot dog. You can see these being made in the streets, too; they are the regular between-meal snack of a great proportion of the populace. They are sold for very

little, and even the beggars eat them.

We ate artichokes and several other courses, including chicken, all covered with the rich, hot brown mole which was bubbling in the doorway. We finished off with stewed greengages: at least, they would have been greengages, only that inside them it turned out they had half a dozen small stones instead of one big one, ordinary size.

This was accompanied by wailing Mexican music rendered by an orchestra perched precariously on the smallest balcony I have ever seen. We were closely watched by the other diners. These were all men except in one case: a girl, young, dark, beautiful, accompanied by an older, plainer duenna.

The Mexican Indians have sad, incurious eyes, big and brown. They rarely smile. Maybe they

don't see the joke. Maybe there isn't one.

At the door we were besieged by lottery-ticket sellers and by beggars. The beggars are professional beggars; it is their regular job, and if they don't like it, at least they are used to it. They have a regular sleeping-place where they sleep under layers of newspapers. They make an indifferent but perfectly secure livelihood, so we were told.

The Mexican Indian is coming into his own artistically. The crude but gallant carvings of the early Aztecs, the simple, effective designs used for their pottery-making, their rug-weaving, are far nearer to the modern conception of art than the rococo, gilded splendour with which it was overlaid.

There probably never was in history a clash of arts so complete as the clash of the simple Aztec art with the over-ornate, baroque magnificence of the decadent Spanish art of the time of the Conquest.

They mixed as indifferently as oil and water, and sometimes with curious effect (as oil on water may take on strange shapes, colours, patterns). The work of building the Spanish churches was carried out by Indian workmen who, with little that was Spanish to copy, largely incorporated their own

ideas. Such decorations as they were given to duplicate they copied faithfully. For instance, they were shown a bit of carving on a chair to imitate. On the side of the building they reproduced the whole chair, giant-size.

Diego Rivera and Clemente Orozco get a lot from the early Aztec art, adding their own sense of political satire, which is plenty strong. Orozco's murals which decorate (some say defile) the walls of the Secretariat of Education would seem to be strong meat for the adolescent mind. The effect of them is evidently subconscious, though. Mexican schoolboys are just about the same as any other schoolboys, and they have done their sums, written their names, conveyed their messages, romantic and otherwise, on all the get-at-able points of the paintings.

The sad expression of the Mexican Indian doesn't mean that he never has any fun. Things aren't so bad for him when it comes down to it. Not now. There have been some pretty bad times, but things started turning the corner in 1910 and they have been turning ever since. It looks as if they may

even get right round one day.

The Indians have had their champions, too, even among their oppressors. There was the good Viceroy, Revillagigedo. He was a regular Solomon.

One time a poor Indian came to him and said he had found a bag of golden ounces in the street. A reward had been promised the finder, and the Viceroy told the Indian where to take the bag.. The owner, a Spaniard, received the bag, slipped two ounces of it into his pocket, accused the Indian of

stealing his money, and drove him out of the house without his reward.

The Viceroy heard of this and sent for them both. The Spaniard explained what had happened. "Wait," said the Viceroy. "How many ounces were in the bag you lost?" "Twenty-eight," said the Spaniard. "Now there are twenty-six." "Count them down," said the Viceroy, and the Spaniard did so. The Viceroy saw that there were only twenty-six ounces in the bag, said, "I see it is as you say. The case is clear, and we have all been mistaken. If the Indian had been a thief, he would never have brought back the bag and stolen merely two ounces. He would have kept the whole. It is evident that this is not your bag, but another which this poor man has found. Continue to search for your bag of gold. This one the Indian shall keep."

And there was once an American who hired a lot of Indians to work for him. They asked thirty-five centavos a day in wages. For the first week or two he gave them this. Then his conscience began to trouble him. Thirty-five centavos a day couldn't possibly be enough to keep them in beans.

So he doubled their wages.

The Indians were very surprised and pleased when they opened their pay envelopes at the end of the week and found double pay. They were very

grateful about it.

But the next week they never showed up to work at all, and the American went along to find out why. They just didn't need to work that week, they pointed out, since he had been so kind as to pay them for no work at all. They would be back the following week, though. They were, and got their thirty-five centavos. They were quite happy about it, claiming that they had never really anticipated getting every other week off for the rest of their lives.

RECIPES

TORTAS

Tortas are such a typically Mexican product that they are probably not even suitable for the English palate. Just for the hell of it, though, I will tell you how they are made. They are tortillas (I've told you about those) rolled and stuffed with nearly anything. I saw one lot filled with mashed frijoles (rich brown beans) seasoned with lard, grated cheese, juice of chilli, aguacate (ask your universal provider for that), scraps of meat (or anything else) soaked in garlic, onions, pepper and salt. Try this in your bath.

MOLE SAUCE

Seed 6 ounces chillies after soaking for ½ hour in boiling water. You should use as many different kinds of chillies as you can find: those long, thin ones; the dark red, bigger ones; and another, lighter red kind. Add a handful of nuts, and grind them all up in a stone grinder—the kind I told you about in the last section. If you still haven't got one, use a fine blade on a mincing-machine and put them through three times. Fry for five minutes in hot olive oil, add a ounces ground sesame seed, a dessert-spoonful sugar, a little ground clove and other ground seeds or spices (cinnamon, black pepper, senugreek). Fry all up together again. Add a pint of boiling water and stir it

all up, cooking slowly. Put in chopped-up tomatoes, small green onions and pimentos. This is a sauce to go over things, but you can cook the meat or birds right in it. In which case now is the time to joint them up, brown them in oil, drain, and add, with a pint of boiling water (which goes in anyway). Add cold water whenever the sauce looks like boiling – it should only simmer – or if it gets too thick (it should be creamy thick). Cook for an hour, stirring once in a while. This kind of sauce, in varying strengths and permutations, is used a great deal by the Mexicans, and hides up a multitude of shin-bones.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Mexico: Beggar Man

THE Floating Garden at Xochimilcho is one of the few points of interest mentioned in any Mexican travel brochure. It is probably the one place in Mexico in which the traveller will

be disappointed.

For one thing, the name is deceptive; it isn't the gardens, but you, who float: in a rather dirty punt decorated with flowers as for a (not very important) carnival. Propelled by a gondolier dressed in the usual sombrero and serape, you drift along narrow, straight canals edged with poplar-trees. Cabbages

and corn grow in the island gardens.

Other boats, flower-sellers' boats, follow you up and down the waterways with occupants who beseech you to buy large-size pansies which they protest are violettas, and press into your face whenever you are near enough. You can also hire a boatload of itinerant musicians to play "O Sole Mio" to you for tuppence as you sail under bridges, bannered with signs in English, suggesting that what you have really been needing is Highland Queen whisky. After an hour of the rather bleak waterways (you are not allowed to land before; you have not had your money's worth) you begin to think there may be something in this idea.

Further away from Mexico City is the small town of Cuernavaca (it means cow's horn). All around here the road is said to be dangerous: robbers. They spring out at motorists and take everything they have, even their clothes. Motorists in the know carry newspapers for just such an emergency; even if they can't read.

Cuernavaca has several things: a lot of soldiers, the villa of Calles (Mexico's present-day Mussolini, no less), the Borda Gardens, and a nice hotel furnished Mexican style but with American plumbing and swimming-pool. It also has, in common with most Mexican villages, an open market; and, in common with some others, Popocatapetl, which is a picturesque volcano with a snowy peak. You probably remember learning about it at school, along with Lake Titicaca.

We stayed here quite a few days and lay in the sun, and walked around the Borda Gardens, went to

market, and took a look at Calles's villa.

The Borda Gardens cost a million pesos to build (Borda dug his money out of the silver-mines), but it is just a garden now, a little gone to seed at that. There aren't even any flowers in it to speak of, though there is some nice stone statuary and a gold-

fish pond or two.

The market is in the open, of course. Most of the shopkeepers display their goods on the ground, spread a tattered awning or an umbrella to protect them from the sun. A few have stalls. There are two sorts of things to be bought: genuine Mexican handicrafts, things made by the Indians for the Indians: straw baskets, lovely shapes and colours;

straw dolls like guys, any size from a few inches to a few feet; wrought tin tankards; lanterns; candlesticks; glass: blue and green goblets sown with air-bubbles; rugs, mostly hand-woven and in traditional designs, some for the floor, some to wear.

In the evenings the Indian wraps himself up well in one of these rugs (they are called serapes). There is a hole in the centre for his head to go through. There are as many ways to wear a serape as there are ways to wear a sombrero: as many ways as there are Indians to wear them.

The rest of the goods in the market is cheap junk from Japan and America, which looks strangely over-produced and anachronistic among the things which have come in, perhaps hundreds of miles, on their owners', or on their owners' mules', backs; and left, after market, the same way, but on different backs.

After a few days, or a few hours, or a few weeks at Cuernavaca you will go on to Taxco. It is inevitable. Almost certainly you will be armed with an introduction to a Mr. William Spratling.

Mr. Spratling is an American gentleman who is by

profession a writer and by trade an art dealer.

Scouring almost deserted hillsides, he has captured native carpet-makers, seated them before great looms, resurrected even older and more traditional designs than the ones, inherited from many generations, they knew already.

The shop, decorated with parrots, overlooks the Borda Cathedral (Borda's second gift to humanity, via the Mexican silver-mines). It is a building with a mellowed and impressive rose-brown exterior,

and an interior cluttered with rococo gilt-work, gaily coloured plaster life-sized angels a-straddle

papier-mâché clouds.

Mr. Spratling is also famous for his silverware. He makes quite a nice thing out of the silver trade, and really beautiful, if a little arty-crafty, are some of the brooches, bracelets and pendants copied from seals excavated from Maya and Aztec tombs, in a silver which is almost iridescent in its dull lustre.

If you stay long enough in Taxco you will also meet the Pantons. These two are typical of the American expatriots who, choosing Mexico for their country of exile, nearly always make their headquarters in the steep, cobbled, twisty, uphill town of Taxco, where a banana-tree grows to full height in a season, and where it is always warm and not too hot, the temperature varying, as it does, only

fifteen degrees all the year round.

The Pantons are an attractive couple who are the centre of the American expatriot colony. They live in Taxco all the year round, and have been there for some years now, so they are considered permanent expatriots. There are, of course, the other, less permanent ones, who come only for a few weeks or a few months each year. These, though they come armed with sketch-books, note-books, and introductions, and are better customers to Mr. Spratling, and others who sell arts and crafts (especially handwoven material, which they always wear), are not admitted into the inner circle. They stay in one of the two hotels, and they send off a lot of postcards. They are never really a part of the life of the community.

With the Pantons, it is different. They have their own small house built round its patio, which has its own banana-trees in it. And they are workers. Not always, of course, but when they are in the mood. Beatrice Panton is a painter, and Stuart is a writer. He is writing a book. He has been writing it ever since he came to Mexico, five years ago, and it is a masterpiece. All his friends know this.

Beatrice, who used to paint polite little water-colour sketches of seascapes and herbaceous borders, has found a greater variety for expression here among the cactuses and sombreros, the trees of white camellia and golden rod, the trails of Mediterranean-blue morning glory, the hedges of bougainvillæa and poinsettia. But especially the cactuses. The organ cactus, twenty feet high, with its tall, straight upward branches like the pipes of a mighty Wurlitzer, makes a fine background for a little sombrero'd Mexican child.

The morning glory she painted a lot when she first came. But now, what with late nights and one thing and another, she doesn't get around to it. Anyway, she is a little tired of its self-conscious

beauty.

The Pantons get up about noon. They lounge around the patio in pyjama suits. Sometimes they get fits of work, and then they make big plans for all they are going to do. When Stuart finishes his book they are going to do a book together, all about Mexican life. He will write it and she will do a great number of illustrations. As Beatrice says: "The natives are pretty lovable, and just the quaintest things to draw."

The book, which they discuss at length through many sunny noons and drowsy afternoons, gives them the feeling that they are particularly hard at work, and makes them enjoy their evenings more.

It is after six that they really begin to live. It is then that the other expatriots gather round and drink tequila or mesqual (both made from distilled pulque, made in its turn from the juice of the maguey plant). They talk far into the night. They all like to eat simple, native food, and some days Beatrice will prowl around the market in search of something new.

But mostly the shopping is done by Conchita, who is also their cook. Conchita buys wild duck from a pedlar and turkeys and chicken from the market. She makes excellent vegetable dishes of frijole beans cooked with fruit: bananas or pineapple or avocado pear. She uses avocado a good deal, blending it with cauliflower, pimento, chilli, ripe tomato, or just plain lemon-juice and lettuce. She makes tortas and encheladas with all kinds of different stuffings, and for special feasts cooks turkey in a rich mole sauce with many spices and herbs which she grows herself in a corner of the patio. She grows fennel and spearmint, marjoram and thyme, tarragon and rosemary and parsley: all herbs which grow in England. She also uses leaves from the avocado pear tree, which are liquoricy, leaves from the bitter orange tree, vanilla pods from the orchids, and a number of other typically Mexican flavourings.

The spices she buys from the spice man, who

concocts for her special mixtures.

Conchita is devoted to the household, and without her they would be lost, they often say.

The expatriots all have their own particular work. There are poets and novelists, sculptors, painters, musicians. They discuss each other's work and genius in detail most nights, swilling down their

tequila and fresh lime-juice.

They are complimentary about their hostess's work, which is more easily admired than Stuart's (though he does occasionally read a few chapters of his book aloud). The Pantons are not always the hosts, but mostly they are. They have the nicest house and the finest cook in Taxco.

They say, the expatriots, that Beatrice's work shows a strong resemblance to the work of Diego Rivera: not his big frescoes, of course, but his smaller representations of Mexican life, his book illustrations. Certainly she has acquired recently a very decorative use of sombreros and cactus plants, of huddled Mexican figures and sad Indian faces.

She leaves political inferences to him, though. She thinks they are interesting, but a little unnecessary and sordid. She just doesn't see things that way. It is better, she maintains, to look on the bright side of things and not always be lifting the curtain to peer behind the scenes. Maybe she is influenced by the fact that her family packs pork in Chicago. She doesn't admit it, but maybe she appreciates that the profit system is not without its advantages to her. She and her husband live on the profits of a beggarly one or two thousand pigs per annum.

I may be wasting my time telling you all these Ow

highly seasoned Mexican foods. Perhaps you can't eat anything hotter than a cup of warm Oxo; some other part of the book will probably interest you more; or maybe you can't learn to care for any of it. Too bad.

RECIPES

FRIJOLES

A pint of rich brown beans – frijoles – or you can use any dark, dried beans. Soak them overnight, of course. Next day cover them with cold water and simmer them for three hours. Add onions, peppercorns and salt, and continue cooking until both are tender. The water should be gauged so there is very little left by the time the simmering is over with. Then add tomato sauce, more pepper and salt if necessary – the dish should be as highly seasoned as you can take it. Pieces of fat bacon add a bit of excitement to the dish.

SWEET TORTILLAS

Plain tortillas are flat and tasteless, though I'm told you get to like this: especially with rich mole sauces. Sweet tortillas are perhaps a little more European.

You start by making a syrup of ½ pound melted sugar,

and adding cinnamon and a touch of ground ginger.

For the cakes you need ½ pound Indian corn meal flour, which you should really, to do the thing properly, grind yourself. This way. You put 1 pound corn into 2 saucepan with lime-water made from 1 ounce slaked lime. Fill up the pan with water and boil until the husk comes off the kernel when rubbed between the fingers (about ten

minutes). Drain and grind finely. Add salt and enough water to make a soft dough. Pat the resulting paste into flat, round cakes in the hands (you know, the old game of pat-a-cake). They've got to get wafer thin. Bake in a coolish oven until crisp. Serve warm with the hot syrup poured over. It's cheating, but good, to butter them first.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Eintopfgericht

T was a German boat on which we left Mexico though it had a Spanish name: the Sierra Nevada. I have heard that it was afterwards bought by the Italians for use as a troopship. It was a hunky old ship with a lot of inside cabins.

At first I was given one of these. Although I had it to myself – there were four bunks, but the ship was not half filled – I didn't think there was enough air for one person to breathe, let alone four. The war can't have been all fun for the Italians.

Somewhere around the middle of the first night out, I crawled out of bed, sagged into a dressing-

gown, and went in search of the purser.

Ship's officers on a German ship are brought up on the customer-is-always-right tradition, so that when I explained that the English are not accustomed to the kind of heat there is in the Mexican Gulf, and that I would undoubtedly break out in a plague and perish unless I slept where there was air, the purser didn't even argue. He shrugged his shoulders, just managed not to say that the loss would have been unimportant, gave me an outside cabin.

This was reserved for someone who was to come

on board at Havana, but I could, he told me, stay there till then. After that he would make other arrangements. (He did. He sold me his own cabin for five pounds.)

In my new room someone's luggage was already installed. There was a suitcase and there was a large Mexican basket (the sort that looks like a soiled-linen basket) with its lid heavily corded down. They were both labelled. All the passengers on the boat were either Mexican or German, so I looked at the label with little expectation; I was surprised when it turned out to be English. The address on it was John Hardy, Dorothys, Nutmeadow, Sussex. It was the kind of address which makes outpost-of-the-Empire-builders take the next boat home, it was so English.

I told Steve about it, and we decided that Mr. John Hardy was a youngish school-teacher, an enterprising young man who improved his knowledge of the world during the holidays. Maybe he taught geography by modern methods, so that all his pupils would know too much about the world to pass their exams, which are always concerned chiefly with latitudes and meridians and the chief rivers of Borneo.

Less because we thought him crazy than because of his village, we named him Nutty. (We never told him. We meant to once when, happening upon the village of Nutmeadow, we went to call. He told us then what was in the Mexican washbasket, but we kept our secret. We never told him I'd used his room, either.)

Nothing much except heat happened in the Gulf

of Mexico, but, when we came back on to the boat after our Cuban excursion, Nutty was installed at our table. He wasn't young after all and he wasn't a school-teacher. He was a father taking time out from being something in the City to visit a son working in Mexico City; but somehow he made it sound deeply mysterious. He was like that.

We got quite attached to him after a while. He liked to talk and he liked to listen, and there isn't much to do on a boat except talk and listen. And, of course, eat. We did all three for hours at a time until the stewards started to sweep the saloon

carpet to get us out.

There was more talking than eating, though. In spite of the long-sounding names on the menu, printed both in German and Spanish, there didn't seem to be a very great deal to eat. Even though there were five meals a day, and we had them all,

we lost weight.

Nutty had a fascinating way of wiggling his little finger as he talked that I liked to watch. And after a day or two he knew all about the people on the ship, and would tell us which pretty girl was going into a convent to take the veil, and which Mexican girl who couldn't speak German had left her German husband in Mexico in order to return to Germany with her parents-in-law (who couldn't speak Spanish); and which young couple had a baby that probably would not survive the journey. It was all very exciting, and we would never have found it out alone.

He knew all about everybody else, but he was very secretive about the contents of the Mexican

wash-basket. He had many qualms about whether or not he would get it past the customs, and I began to wish I had made better use of my oppor-

tunity to peek into its contents.

He tried, too, to talk politics to the German officer who sometimes sat at our table, a subject we had been too polite to mention. (I never talk about the colour bar to Indians, or pogroms to Jews, or Hitler to Germans.) Our officer – I think he was the chief engineer – looked over his shoulder and smiled, and told us how fine everything was in Germany just then. He wouldn't know much about concentration camps, he said, and he thought it was a very good idea that German sailors should not be allowed to spend any money in foreign ports. It was our officer who told us about the eintopf-gericht.

I hadn't heard the word before, so he explained it to me; patiently, politely; he was a very polite man. He said that it was a one-dish meal which everybody ate in Germany once a month, even in restaurants, as a penance. It had been a suggestion from the Government, and, like most of their suggestions, had met with unopposed response. The resultant saving in the national housekeeping money went, of course, to Government funds.

The ship, being German territory, would, of course, serve this monthly penance once, but the passengers, even the Germans, were not obliged to eat it, though they would, of course, do so when they returned to Germany. Only the officers were compelled to fast. Nutty asked whether the ship would hand over a contribution for the saving on

officers' meals, and our officer said that yes, certainly it would.

I forgot about this for a few days, and then one day when we came in late for lunch there was our officer with a very large bowl of stew in front of him. It had onions and several kinds of beans in it, and potatoes, and chunks of rich-looking meat. Besides his large bowl there was more of it in a small soup tureen, half emptied.

Nutty studied the menu, and then looked at the officer's plate, and peered at the menu again over

his glasses.

"I don't seem to be able to find any mention of that delicious-looking stew on the menu. I wonder what it is called?" he pondered.

"That," smiled our officer, "is the eintopf-

gericht."

Nutty was surprised, but he ordered it. He ate it almost in silence. "Is this really supposed to be a penance?" he asked at last. "Some sort of a sacrificial fast? And how much do you think they'll have to pay the Government for the saving on my meal?" he asked the officer.

The officer smiled and made a guess.

"Tell the captain to multiply that by twenty," said Nutty. "This is the best meal I've tasted on the whole voyage."

RECIPE

EINTOPFGERICHT or ONE-DISH MEAL

I pound knuckle of veal (stewing beefsteak or scrag of mutton may be used, but veal is better)

1 pint lentils

pint dried lima beans

pint haricot beans

2 onions

I carrot

I turnip

z potatoes

Tomato purée

Soak the beans overnight.

Cut the meat into small squares, brown on all sides for a few minutes in hot oil, season with salt and pepper. Add the mixed beans and the other vegetables cut up, a bunch of berbs, and cover with stock. Add 2 tablespoonfuls of tomato purée or tomato sauce (not strictly necessary, but a great improvement). Simmer for at least two hours.

CHAPTER XXXV

Havana

E planned several things for Havana. Steve's plans were more complicated than mine. He was going to drink a Baccardi cocktail right out of the cow; he was going to dance a rumba with someone that could shake just like a rumba rattle; and he was going to eat arroz à la Cubaña.

My ambition was simpler, but I'd been to Havana before. It was just to drink as much pineapple juice as I could get inside me in the few hours we had on shore.

Pineapple juice was only one of the things I remembered about Havana. The other was the mosquitoes, but I didn't want a repeat order on those. The bites that they had taken out of me on my last visit had all been poisonous, and I had looked like someone that hadn't quite recovered from smallpox as soon as the swellings went down. I had forty bites, and they were all on my face.

Steve was a little superior about pineapple juice, which surely, he said, you could get anywhere. I said no doubt you could get rumba and Baccardi and arroz à la Cubaña in the Spanish restaurant in London, but it wouldn't be the same thing. He

said well, he could do with a long drink, and if I wanted pineapple juice he was quite willing to ride along, and so I said thank you, and took his picture outside the Baccardi Building to show there was no ill feeling.

So we crossed the street to the first corner bar we could see; there is a bar on every corner in Havana. They all serve pineapple juice made from sunripened pineapples, whipped with an electric whisk, and served very cold. Steve admitted that perhaps after all there was something special about it. So we had another before starting round to look at the town.

There had been a revolution recently; there were still traces of it. One of the traces – a large-size negro in soldier's uniform, heavily armed – insisted on inspecting the contents of my bag before I was allowed to enter Woolworths. The inside of my handbag contained as many treasures as a school-boy's spocket; certainly I carry a large handbag. But it is too small to hold a bomb. It seems, though, they make quite little, snug bombs these days, just the thing for a Woolworth store.

First we planned to go sight-seeing and then to go to the beach. Steve is a good person to travel with. He realises that the sights must be seen but that they are not everything in life. Also he agreed to put off his arroz à la Cubaña and his Baccardi and his rumba till later in the day. But we went right on drinking pineapple juice at every street corner.

We went to the Capitol, new since I had been

there last. You paid to go round, and got a guide thrown in. The guide we got was pleased to hear we were English. Most of the tourists were American and could not appreciate the real splendour of the Capitol: its English ceilings, tastefully carried out by Messrs. Waring & Gillow "in the best English style."

One of the curious features of the Capitol is a large-size diamond, which is stuck in the middle of the floor and covered with a piece of glass. It seems a great temptation to see the diamond lying there with only a bit of glass covering it, and you think it must be very good for the Cuban character to have so much temptation to resist. Then they tell you that between the glass and the diamond there is an electric current strong enough to kill a man, so maybe the temptation is not so strong after all.

Outside, we met a man who wanted to show us round his father's cigar factory. It was a very humane factory, he told us. The workers had books read aloud to them to keep them from getting bored. And when there was no reading there were visitors for them to look at. But since repeal, he told us, there had not been so many visitors, and they would certainly welcome a visit from us. We told him to go right on reading until five o'clock, when we might possibly be back from the beach.

There is a nice beach about ten miles outside of Havana, named Marinao Beach. Besides a sort of casino-swimming-beach there is also the Country Club and the Yacht Club. But only the casino

is open to tourists.

Still, it is a pleasant enough place. There is a narrow strip of beach with dives arranged on it, and swing seats and a chute, and a little switchback. Behind this there is an open-air restaurant under the thick shade of clipped-back banyan trees.

We bathed and slept in the sun, and had lunch, and eventually took the tram back into Havana

again.

We sat down at a table outside the best-looking restaurant we could find. We ordered some Baccardi cocktails, and they were strong too, but they weren't mixed right, Steve said. It was more difficult about the arroz à la Cubaña. They had never heard of Cuban rice; they implied there wasn't any such thing. There was rice, yes, very savoury, with bits of chicken and mushrooms; very good. So we had to have that.

A negro in a funny hat came and shook a rumba rattle at us, and that reminded Steve of his third quest. Too bad, said the waiter; there had been an exhibition of rumba last week at the cinema, but this week there was a Viennese couple doing fancy

waltzes.

So we paid for the dinner, and went and sat on high stools in a corner bar and drank pineapple juice. Havana wasn't much of a place, Steve said. Not what it was cracked up to be. But the pineapple juice was certainly fine.

RECIPE

ARROZ A LA CUBAÑA

When we got back to London we paid a special visit to Martinez's Spanish restaurant to tell them about their Cuban rice not being as Cuban as it should be. We had some just to see if it was as good as we had remembered. It was. Cuban or not, the recipe which they gave me is worth using.

For four people you need:

- 12 ounces rice (Spanish, Jap, or Caroline rice; not Indian)
 - I small onion
 - 4 bananas
 - 8 eggs
 - 3 large tablespoonfuls of good olive oil, salt and half a bay leaf

Pour the oil into a medium-sized casserole, and, when

hot, add the onion, finely cut, and the bay leaf.

When they begin to take colour, add the rice, and stir well for about half a minute. Now add 1½ pints of boiling stock (if no stock is available, use boiling water), and let it cook for about fourteen minutes.

A few minutes before the rice is ready, fry the eggs and the bananas (skinned and cut lengthwise) in olive oil. When ready, serve the rice with the eggs and bananas.